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The light shines in the darkness...p.2

61st year of publication

The Gospel according to four
Christmas Carols p.12



When the angels
Bethlehem and see

to

Christmas

The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

Harry der Nederlanden

Christmas season. We sing "Silent Night, Holy Night," "Away in a Manger," "O Little town of Bethlehem," and "Hark the Herald Angels sing". We love to conjure up the scene of Jesus lying in a manger, radiant in the darkness of the shed warmed by a cow and a donkey and surrounded by adoring parents, shepherds and magi bearing gifts. It is understandably a favorite subject for artists, poets song writers and Christmas cards through the ages.

We celebrate the holiday by gathering with family and friends in the warmth of homes lit by twinkling lights, decorated with pine trees and garlands. We create a space of intimate fellowship, gather around a special meal, exchange gifts and attend special worship services. We do all we can to create an atmosphere of closeness, joy, companionship and coziness.

The poet Joseph Brodsky in one of his *Nativity Poems* conjures up the feeling by describing a small creche:

The wise men; Joseph; the tiny Infant; Mary;
the cows; the drovers, each with his dromedary;
the hulking shepherds in their sheepskins – they
have all become toy figures made of clay.

We huge grown-ups, he muses, gaze into that tiny, long-ago world as if from another cosmos, but we "half wish to clench our eyes, or step/ into a different galaxy, in whose wastes there shine/ more lights than there are sands in Palestine." Hope and longing in Brodsky's poem become a desire for escape.

We tend to focus on the biblical scene that most reflects the mood we are looking for. I admit that when I'm looking for a picture to put on the front of our Christmas issue, I too am drawn by those warm, intimate nativity scenes. "The Adoration of the Shepherds" by Georges de La Tour on the front page of this issue glows with the kind of intimacy and warm devotion that we seek in this season. The shepherds seem especially quiet and well-behaved in La Tour's painting, as if they are sitting in church, but they are all able to get a very close look at the newborn infant.

In some paintings the shepherds are shy. They peek at the baby and Mary through a window in the shed or they hang back near the entrance. In other paintings the stable becomes so crowded with shepherds, magi, ladies-in-waiting, children, cows, donkeys and even dogs that the scene looks like a noisy carnival. No silent night there. And if all those earthly onlookers weren't enough, often angels perch on the rafters and elbow their way in between the other visitors, while fat little cherubs spill out of the dark corners like popcorn. The scene often becomes so overcrowded that we look for Joseph in vain. He has absented himself. It's all too much for him. Mary, on the other hand, is always composed and serene, concentrating all her attention on the child.

No matter how imagined, it is a scene that rightfully etches itself deep into our minds and hearts: God in the flesh as a baby lying helpless and innocent in a feeding trough for beasts. It's a mesmerizing scene; it so captivates our imagination that it pushes everything else far into the background. We see only the tender infant and the doting parents, the hovering beasts and angels, and the awed visitors – as if the scene were a product of our own cozy, sentimental family celebrations.

Of course we know better. The light shining from the manger into Mary's face is the light shining into the darkness of the world, and while it is, to be sure, the light that enlignens the world and all humanity, it also exposes

the depths of the darkness that envelope it, precede it and follow it.

When the heavens open to spill out choirs of angles proclaiming the marvelous, miraculous news of Immanuel – God-with-us – it is after a silence of some 400 years in which Israel suffered defeat and exile. In the several decades preceding, the Land of Promise has become an appendage of the Roman Empire. The vision of Isaiah in which he sees the conquered kings of the surrounding nations bringing the wealth of nations as tribute seems a foolish dream. Over the years Israel has also developed a new religious leadership, many of whom have worked out a compromise with Rome and its pagan culture.

The religious leaders – Priests, Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes – all are conspicuous by their absence as the Christmas story unfolds. It's not that they no longer study the Torah and the prophets. They know enough to give directions to the exotic visitors from the East. But their learning doesn't prompt them to bestir themselves and join the pilgrimage to Bethlehem. Herod takes the words of the prophets more seriously than do Israel's leaders.

The events leading up to the manger scene that we cherish seem anything but part of the good news or part of redemptive history. Israel is not the womb, the matrix awaiting the birth of the Messiah. It is under foreign, pagan control, and Joseph and Mary are traveling far from Nazareth where they'd rather be not out of pious motives but because of Caesar's decree. How ignominious!

But Israel's leadership is not just left outside, obscured in the darkness by virtue of their own choice. God deliberately by-passes Jerusalem and the religious hierarchy and instead opts for witnesses who are marginal. Despite the beautiful imagery of the Psalms that pictures God as the shepherd of his people, shepherds didn't merit very much respect in Israel. Although Luke tells us that the shepherds hurried to tell others what they had seen, we don't get the impression that the surrounding towns emptied to do homage to the new-born king. That homage had to come from afar, from astrologer-wise men in a distant pagan land, men who didn't have the oracles of God at their fingertips but whose eyes were opened by a star. They didn't remain in their studies contemplating their drawings and scrolls, but gathered their retinue, their horses and camels, and made the long pilgrimage to an obscure part of the Roman Empire to see this child specially marked by the heavens.

This darkness at the center of Israel is further deepened by the darkness in the heart of Herod. Again the little family is forced to move, fleeing the butchery of Herod's soldiers by retracing the Exodus in reverse. Again, what ignominy! To be forced to seek safety in the house of bondage!

It's no wonder we want to focus on that moment of relative peace around the manger. Much of the Christmas story is far from pleasant or romantic. It is part of the darkness. Yet, that dark background is at the heart of the Christmas story, for it conceals and reveals the great themes of Jesus' ministry – that he came to suffer for our sake, that he becomes the outcast so we might become children of God, that he raises the weak and the lowly and brings down the haughty, that he fulfills the words of the



Rembrandt, *Flight into Egypt*

prophets and the great story of the liberation from slavery.

Above all, we see that in our struggle with evil and sin, in our longing for hope and deliverance, we are not left to the plans and ambitions of men, however powerful, but that even through their decrees it is God's decrees that prevail. The Roman Empire is past history, but the infant in the manger walked through the darkness with us, even through death itself, to become our Lord and King and to establish a Kingdom without end.

The Son of God, the Eternal King,
That did us all salvation bring,

And freed the soul from danger;
He whom the whole world could not take,
The Word, which heaven and earth did make,
Was now laid in a manger.

The Father's wisdom willed it so,
The Son's obedience knew no No,
Both wills were in one stature;
And as that wisdom had decreed,
The Word was now made flesh indeed,
And took on Him our nature.

From "A Hymn on the Nativity of My Savior"
by Ben Jonson

As we gaze from our own darkness and from the darkness of this our world into the light that blazed up in Bethlehem and that continues to blaze forth in the Good News proclaimed by the angels and by the Christ himself, we are more filled with wonder than with understanding. We begin to understand only a very little of this the central event of the human story. But as we draw near the light, it crystalizes inside us and works out its geometries in our hearts and lives. And one day it will so suffuse us that we are wholly children of light flickering with his glory.

Christmas

Principalities
& Powers

David T. Koyzis

Magnificat

During the season of Advent we anticipate liturgically the first coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ into the world, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, as the Creed puts it. Reformed Christians do not make as much of Mary as do Roman Catholics and Orthodox. Nevertheless, even heirs of the Reformation recognize that Mary's affirmative response to Gabriel's surprising announcement was a singular and unprecedented act, requiring no small amount of courage in one so young and vulnerable. By God's grace Mary became the mother of Jesus, God's only begotten Son. Luke ascribes one of the key biblical canticles to her, usually called by its first word in Latin: *Magnificat*.

The *Magnificat* came to find a place in the Liturgy of the Hours, the cycle of daily prayers associated with especially the western church, where it was sung at Vespers. The Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer* made it an integral component of its service of Evening Prayer. Over the centuries countless composers have set it to music.

Two decades ago I myself versified the *Magnificat* and composed a tune (named SOUTH BEND, for where I was living at the time) to which it could be sung. I am pleased to present this text below to my readers.

*My soul declares aloud the greatness of the Lord;
to God who saves my spirit sings, rejoicing in his word.
For he has looked on me despite my humbleness;
and from now on all people shall recall my blessedness.*

*Great marvels he has done, whose holy name we own;
his mercy ever flows to all who worship God alone.
With his own mighty arm he's bid the proud depart;
he's cast the tyrant from his throne and raised the lowly heart.*

*The hungry he has filled with satisfying foods;
the wealthy he has sent away deprived of worldly goods.
To Jacob whom he chose he lends his gracious aid,
according as his mercies rest on all that he has made.*

*He blesses Abraham and his posterity,
as to our forebears he has promised for eternity.
All you whom he has made, the Triune God adore;
praise Father, Son and Spirit too, both now and evermore.*



THE VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD OF TENDERNESSE, 18th century, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of his Son, may we who love and serve God rejoice in his mercies to us and in his mighty acts in this world for our salvation.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is the author of the award-winning *Political Visions and Illusions* (InterVarsity Press). Both words and music to his metrical *Magnificat* can be found at: <http://genevanpsalter.redeemer.ca/>.



Too much Christmas!

Lynn Marie-Ittner Klammer

It was a common occurrence in December – my husband and I arguing about all the work we had to do. When he complained about having to “give up” his last Saturday before the Christmas holiday (to attend yet another event with the kids), I reminded him that his lack of time wasn't as significant as mine. “Your work can be done any time” I told him, “but if mine doesn't get done, Christmas doesn't come.” Silence greeted my comment, and I was glad to see that my words seemed to make an impression on him.

It wasn't until the next day that the impact of my careless words hit me. Since when did anything I do have a controlling affect upon Christmas? When had Christmas become a series of tasks to be completed – gifts to be purchased, cookies to be baked, and decorations to be hung? As I thought back to the previous year, I could recall a similar phrase leaving my lips. “I make Christmas happen” I remember saying one day as I admonished my husband once again for overlooking the contribution that I, and so many other moms, make toward ensuring that their children experience their vision of the holiday. It was a callous statement created out of fatigue and frustration, but a telling one just the same. I understand the significance of Christmas, but somewhere through the years I had come to herald its coming with as much dread as joy.

The holiday experience is the same for many people this time of the year. Commitments to holiday activities and the pressure to create a vision of festive perfection can leach all the fun out of the season. It's no wonder that so many people suffer higher levels of depression during this season, or become overwhelmed with the vast to-do lists necessary to successfully complete the holiday events.

When I stepped back from my own personal to-do lists I began to see the absurdity of all I was attempting to create. Did we really need four Christmas trees? Did each of the forty-five people we bought gifts for outside our family need to be personalized in some way? Was an entire day of baking cookies and treats necessary to our enjoyment of the holiday?

I knew we had reached a critical turn when we cancelled our yearly trip to a nearby church's “living nativity” because we were simply too “burned out” from our hectic schedule. All the “fun” of the holiday had crowded out an event that focused on the true meaning of Christmas. There was too much of society's Christmas in Christmas, and I found myself saying that I couldn't wait until the holiday was over. Where had I gone wrong? When had my well-meaning attempts to contribute to the excitement and joy of the season transformed it into a six-week endurance marathon?

You may not have four Christmas trees in your home or undertake the holidays on the scale with which I do, but I'll bet you understand what I'm talking about. It's easy to get caught up in the demands of society and the expectations of others. It takes very little to make that casual slide into doing “one more special thing” each year-until you look up one Christmas to discover that so many “special things” have robbed you of the one and only truly special thing that there is about Christmas.

In my work with a local health ministry, I have a child with a seriously ill sister. I was reminded of how people (in such circumstances) will say that Christmas was “ruined” for them. I told her that I've always thought that was odd because even though the events and traditions we usually celebrate may be ruined, Christmas never can be. Christmas will still come, and be just as precious a gift, no matter what is happening around us. We need only to remember that.

As I thought about what I had told my young patient, it occurred to me that, even though I was focused on the holiday, I was not really remembering Christmas. My overload of “things” was blocking my vision of what was real. So I've decided to change that. Christmas in my home will no longer have as many decorations or involve an endless stream of festive events and activities. Some people may feel disappointment over the things we eliminate or don't participate in. There will be fewer gifts, less sing-alongs, and a lot less cookies, but it will be real.

Our time will be spent experiencing the “Living Nativity” and other church events, avoiding the holiday's superficial trappings, and prayerfully considering God's gift. Christmas will no longer be a societal vision of a perfect holiday. It will be far better. It will be Christmas.

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*Glory to God in the highest, and
on earth peace to men on whom
his favor rests.*

Luke 2:14

From my family to yours,

Merry Christmas!

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News

At Bali climate change meeting, a hard look at Kyoto

Peter N. Spotts

Nusa Dua, Indonesia – Efforts to start two years of talks aimed at crafting a new global pact on climate change have entered their most intense phase. Ministers from more than 180 countries arrived on Dec. 5 to give final shape to a framework for the talks, which could begin as early as next June.

But even as they look to the future, ministers also will be dealing with the present – giving a final burnish to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol before turning it loose next year. The protocol's first – and perhaps only – enforcement period begins Jan. 1 and runs through 2012.

UN officials here say they are cautiously optimistic that industrial countries as a group will meet – and perhaps beat – the pact's goal for trimming greenhouse-gas emissions, mainly carbon dioxide.

But critics of the 10-year-old agreement have already written it off as a failure, even before it takes full force. To some, Kyoto's projected results are based on accounting tricks and fundamental economic changes that predate the agreement. At issue is how the structure of the original accord will shape future agreements.

Critics and proponents agree that from the climate's perspective, Kyoto's impact will get lost in the weeds. Under the agreement, industrial-country participants must reduce their greenhouse-gas emissions by an average of more than 5 percent relative to 1990 levels. But that will have a negligible effect on atmospheric CO2 concentrations.

Moreover, compared with 1990 levels, carbon-dioxide emissions from industrial countries are at an all-time high, observes Yvo de Boer, who heads the secretariat overseeing the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change – the 1992

treaty that gave rise to the Kyoto Protocol. Rising emissions “would give you the impression that things are going completely in the wrong direction,” he acknowledges.

But the protocol offers a range of options for meeting emissions targets. The countries under Kyoto's jurisdiction plan to take full advantage of the range of approaches the pact permits. Based on national implementation plans, Mr. de Boer says, projections of emissions trends in these countries over the next five years “brings us to the conclusion that the vast majority are in a position to meet their Kyoto targets.”

The average masks stark disparities. Some countries are projected to post double-digit growth in emissions during the period while others hit double-digit lows. Moreover, he says, some former Soviet republics “have what you could call windfall targets,” since their economies virtually ground to a halt following the collapse of the former Soviet bloc. Their emissions were tiny compared with their assigned targets.

Still, the rest of the group is expected to do well enough that when these former Soviet republics are thrown into the mix, industrial countries could end up trimming their collective emissions by up to 11 percent below 1990 levels, de Boer says.

To some of the agreement's critics, the projected results are based on coincidental economic circumstances from when they were determined in 1990. For instance, they point to former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who changed her country's fossil-fuel base from coal to natural gas. And following the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Germany reunited with East Germany, which was undergoing a wrenching economic change, dramatically lowering its emissions almost overnight.

Picking 1990 as the base year “is extremely fortunate for the Kyoto Protocol because factors having nothing to do with the protocol are responsible for aggregate emissions trends,” notes Roger Pielke Jr., a science-policy specialist at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Kyoto countries likely would have met their targets even without a protocol in place, he argues.

Whether or not the protocol succeeds under its own modest terms, however, nearly everyone agrees that what comes next will look far different. Just how different will become apparent as negotiators here lay out their framework for talks between now and 2009.

An initial draft of that framework emerged after the first week of talks and it contains elements “that touch all the right bases,” says David Doniger, policy director for the National Resources Defense Council's Climate Center.

For instance, its preamble explicitly acknowledges that all industrial countries party to the Framework Convention on Climate Change – which would include the US – need to reduce emissions some 25 to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020. And it calls for quantified national emissions objectives by all developed countries under the convention. These would be harmonized with emissions goals for the countries currently covered under the Kyoto Protocol. It also aims to include several key topics for negotiation that developing countries are seeking.

But, Mr. Doniger cautions, the fate of the road map could hinge on a mere handful of possible changes. Thus, over the next few days, negotiators will be parsing phrases and angling to insert or delete language in ways that could lead to a consensus among ministers, which is required to approve the negotiating road map.

Peter N. Spotts is a staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Venezuela's Chávez defiant, despite defeat

President Hugo Chávez indicated that he will not give up on plans to change the Constitution, even though voters rejected the idea this past Sunday.

Daniel Cancel

Caracas, Venezuela – Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez says the time has come for “profound reflection” following his first electoral defeat in nine years at the helm Sunday night.

“Did I make a mistake in choosing the strategic moment to present [the proposal for sweeping Constitutional changes]?” Mr. Chávez asked on state television Monday, Dec. 3, the day after the vote. “It could be. We still aren't mature enough to adopt an openly socialist project.”

But Chávez's acceptance of the results has strengthened his democratic credentials, and analysts say he'll use that to push his socialist “revolution” just as fervently as he has been.

“It is striking how quickly and shrewdly Chávez turned the defeat to his political advantage, claiming the high road and retaking the initiative,” says Michael Shifter, the vice president for policy at the Inter-American Dialogue, a Washington think tank. “He remains determined and resolute in pursuing his revolution, but the vote means he will encounter growing resistance, not only at home but throughout the region. The loss reveals seeds of decay that are likely to intensify over the next year or so.”

Chávez's base has weakened ...

After getting nearly 3 million votes fewer than last year's presidential elections, government officials have wonder what happened to their key bases of support. Reports showed that in Petare – one of the most densely populated slums in Latin America and normally a stronghold for Chávez – the “No” option won 62 percent while only 38 percent backed the constitutional reform.

“Chávez needs to reflect upon the proposal and his close collaborators. There must be a new sensibility when new changes are proposed, because any decision he attempts to make by force could cause serious consequences,” says Carlos Luna, a political analyst and professor at the Central University of Venezuela.

But few believe the results will cause Chávez to alter his course.

Alberto Barrera, a novelist and co-author of the Chávez biography, “Chávez sin Uniforme,” says the president seems unwilling to read the truth from the electoral results, showing what he calls a “short circuit” between what Chávez wants and what the people want. “President Chávez exists because the country's elite ignored and turned their backs on the will of the people, but now it seems he may be willing to do the same,” he says.

... but he won't give up on reforms

Speculation has begun to mount about how and when

Chávez will attempt to push some of the reforms into law, whether unilaterally by decree or through the National Assembly, which he dominates. He also controls the country's courts, most of its media, and almost all local and state governments.

His options may be limited by article 345 of the current Constitution, which prohibits a reform project defeated at the polls to be submitted again during the same presidential term.

In theory, this means the president could not push through proposals such as curbing the Central Bank's autonomy, the formalization of Venezuela as a socialist state, creating a confederation of nations with Cuba, abolishing presidential term limits, and presidential appointment of local and state authorities.

But Chávez has the power to pass any law unilaterally, until August 2008, that does not explicitly contradict the current Constitution. During that time, analysts expect him to pass such reforms as a 36-hour workweek, universal social security, and a fund for independent workers.

The National Assembly could also convoke a constitutional assembly to change the rules. Chávez supporters are likely to control the assembly until internal elections in 2010.

“It's true that during this constitutional period I've lost the right to present this reform proposal again of my own initiative, but the Venezuelan people have the authority and right to do so,” said Chávez Tuesday. “If the people wish to, a request can be made before this presidential period ends in five years.”

Striking a defiant tone

Chávez also warned people against thinking that the vote was a serious blow to his moves to bring “21st century socialism” to the country, and had a few choice words for those who voted “No” in Sunday's referendum.

“Chávez will be here for a long time and the revolution will be here for a long time,” he said. “The revolution came here to stay so don't make ridiculous conclusions. If they [his supporters that abstained or voted “No”] were looking to punish me, they flagellated themselves.”

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Biography

Samuel M. Zwemer: A man to remember

In this century, not many have lived who had the talent and drive of Samuel Zwemer. During his lifetime he exerted a tremendous influence on the Christian mission to Islam, as well as the worldwide advance of the Church and the Gospel.

Robert E. Speer, quoted in J. Christy Wilson, Jr., "The Apostle to Islam..." *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, Oct.-Dec., 1996, p. 106

Harry Antonides

One of the defining issues in the free West is its encounter with a radical version of Islam, which is diametrically opposed to the secular spirit of our age. Instances of such encounters between two very different ways of life are everywhere.

Clashing cultures

Here is a case in point taken from a letter published in the *National Post* (Nov. 23), written by a student at the University of Toronto, who had taken a course in the history of Islam. During a break in a lecture on sharia law, she chatted with a fellow student and told him that she thought that stoning people for adultery, or any other reason, was barbarous and uncivilized. She continued:

His response was to assure me that things weren't so bad any more because the Koran permits a sentence of 80 lashes to be substituted for the stoning penalty. He apparently thought I would consider flogging to be civilized. Feeling very cold, I asked him if he thought a person who had been raped should also be lashed. He smiled and shrugged his shoulders. I felt sick.

This student's experience underscores the need for knowing how we should indeed respond to radical Islam. One problem is that there is much confusion as well as denial about the real nature of Islam. Some think that radical Islam is a corruption of true Islam, which at heart is a religion of peace.

That confusion even exists within the broader Christian community, where many insist that Islam and Christianity have much in common. How to get clarity in this dilemma? How and where do we find reliable guides or mentors who can help us obtain insight into a difficult and confusion subject?

Fortunately, there are many, and here the Internet can provide an invaluable service. In this article I want to single out one person who spent a lifetime in the Christian mission to Islam, traveled widely and lived many years in the Middle East. He mastered the Arabic language and wrote more than 50 books about Islam. He became a teacher of generations of students whom he helped to understand Islam and to inspire them to take part in bringing the Gospel to the Muslim world.

Reaching out to Islam

Samuel M. Zwemer was born into a Dutch immigrant family in 1867, in Vriesland, Michigan, where his father was pastor in the Reformed Church in America. Early in his studies at Hope College and then New Brunswick Seminary, he decided to become a missionary to the Arab World. In 1888, there were no existing American Christian mission organizations to the Muslim world. That was the year Zwemer and a few like-minded students started the Arabian Mission,

which served as a springboard for a much-expanded Christian mission effort.

Zwemer completed his seminary training and was ordained in 1890, when he traveled to Beirut to begin his study of the Arabic language. From there he traveled to Cairo, where he together with a few others explored various possibilities open to them. They decided to start their mission work in Basra (which is in current Iraq) where he worked for six years. There he married Amy Wilkes, a trained missionary nurse from Australia.

They started a new mission station on Bahrain, which was then a British-held island in the Persian Gulf. While there, Zwemer wrote the first of his numerous books, *Arabia: the Cradle of Islam*, which went through four editions between 1900 and 1912.

He soon became widely known as a gifted speaker and writer. While on furlough in the U.S. in 1905, he was offered the position of field secretary of the Reformed Board of Foreign Missions, as well as the traveling representative of the Student Volunteer Movement, both of which he accepted.

The next five years were occupied with traveling and speaking at many conventions and other events. He was the moving force behind the first General Conference of Missionaries to the world of Islam, held in Cairo in 1906. In 1910, Zwemer participated in the influential World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, where plans were laid to begin a quarterly publication called *The Moslem World*.

Despite his demanding schedule of travel, speaking and writing, Zwemer served as editor of this publication without remuneration for thirty-seven years, never missing an issue. His energy and capacity for work must have been enormous. (We are also told that he had a twinkle in his eyes and a great sense of humour.)

In 1912, he also began teaching at the Presbyterian Seminary in Cairo, the city where the oldest and most influential Islamic Al-Azhar University is located. In the next years he traveled widely to speak at numerous venues in North Africa. In South Africa he was able to address Christians in English and Dutch, and in Arabic at meetings of Muslims. He also traveled and lectured in India and Indonesia. He even traveled to China where he was also invited to speak at mosques in several cities because of his ability to speak Arabic and his understanding of Islam.

While addressing conferences in 1922 in Algiers, Tunis and Sousse, Zwemer gave addresses on "Islam as a Missionary Problem." As reported by J. Christy Wilson, Jr., quoted above, Zwemer recalled the church fathers who had been there – Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine – when North Africa was

one of the greatest centers of the Christian church. At that time, it had large churches, libraries and a Christian population numbering in the millions. Then came the tidal wave of the Muslim conquest in the seventh century. The libraries were burned and the churches were either made into mosques or destroyed. Populations were blotted out and North Africa became 'The Land of the Vanished Church.'

In 1929, Zwemer was appointed as professor of missions at Princeton Theological Seminary where he taught till his retirement in 1938 at the age of seventy-one. He continued teaching and speaking at training institutes, seminaries, conventions and churches where he taught and inspired large numbers. In 1946, Zwemer was a keynote speaker at the first Inter-Varsity Student Foreign Mission Fellowship Convention held in Toronto.

At age eighty-three, Zwemer attended the sixtieth anniversary celebration in Kuwait of the mission to the Muslim world he had founded. In early 1952, he suffered a heart attack after he delivered three addresses at a meeting of the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship in New York City. He died on April 2, 1952, and after a memorial service held in the First Presbyterian Church in New York City, his body was transported to Holland, Michigan, where it was buried in the family burial plot.

A rich legacy

The life of this deeply committed and gifted servant of the Lord, who laboured diligently in a very difficult arena of Christian service, was ended. But the fruits of his work in the lives

See **Zwemer** on page 6

How to bridge the chasm between Islam and Christianity

Samuel M. Zwemer

The problem of Islam is perplexing and colossal. It stretches over thirteen centuries and includes many elements, all of which offer scope for study and prayer to those who are engaged in the task of interpreting Christ to Muslims....

The religious problem of Islam is back of it all and is therefore fundamental. The yawning chasm between the devout Muslim and the devout Christian is a problem that faces every missionary, every teacher and preacher. It is real and deep. The chasm cannot be bridged by rickety planks of compromise.

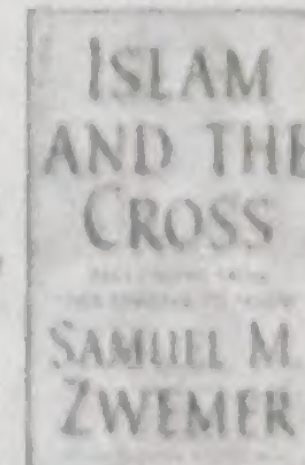
Syncretism would be equivalent to surrender. For Islam thrives only by its denial of the authority of the Scriptures, the deity of our Lord, the blessedness of the Holy Trinity, the cruciality and significance of the cross (nay, its very historicity), and the preeminence of Jesus Christ as King and Savior....

At all of these points the missionary problem is how to bridge the chasm with courage and tact, by the manifestation of the truth in love. The distribution of the Word of God always holds the first place. It has always proved its power. Not less must we flood the world of Islam with a Christian literature that is apologetic without being dogmatic, and captivating rather than polemic....

Islam is a spiritual problem and can be solved only in spiritual terms. To the Muslim mind the unknown quantity is the exceeding greatness of the love of God in Jesus Christ, his Son, our Savior. This is the heart of the problem. Prayer and pains will accomplish wonders in solving it.

In every mission station and in every missionary's prayer life this should be our chief petition: That Muslim hearts may be enlightened so that the glory of the invisible God whom they worship may be revealed to them in the face of Jesus Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Then we will bridge the chasm, because he will bridge it for us.

From Samuel M. Zwemer, "The Call to Prayer," 1923. Reprinted in *Islam and the Cross*, editor, Roger S. Greenway. P&R Publishing, 2002, pp.151-53



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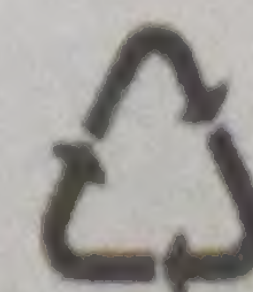
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Stewardship

Generous attitude

It seems wrong to be writing an article to encourage generosity – to be approaching it from an intellectual perspective. It should not be a ‘mind’ thing but rather a ‘heart’ thing. It is our heart that is at the core of our spirituality and our emotions. That is where the spirit of God works within us and gives us the spiritual gift of giving – the real motive for generosity. Yet, in order to get at the ‘heart’ of the matter, we intellectualize this.

Much is written in the Bible about being heart-driven. David was said to be a man after God’s heart. David on many occasions experienced God’s mercy and his Grace. He was a sinner, like you and I, maybe even a greater sinner than I (How dare I say that?) He, like all of us, no matter what the score, deserved the sentence of death. David understood that and it shows through in many of the Psalms that he wrote. David’s life journey had many episodes of sin coupled with repentance and forgiveness. At his life’s end his testimony to God’s grace was very evident in his generosity as it is described for us in 1Chronicles 29. His gratitude to God was very deep.

In another story of generosity, Jesus defended the actions of a woman publicly labeled as sinful. Jesus was invited to the home of a Pharisee named Simon. While reclining at Simon’s table, a woman who had lived a sinful life came in and washed Jesus feet with her tears and dried them with her hair after which she poured out an expensive perfume on them. The Pharisees who observed this spectacle were indignant about this and thought Jesus should have known better and not let such a sinful woman touch him and do this to him. In response to this Jesus asked them (and specifically Simon) to consider this:

Two men owed money to a certain money-lender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?” Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled.” “You have judged correctly,” Jesus said. (Luke 7:41)

Jesus knew the heart of this woman. He knew how she longed for release from her sinful past and her deep heartfelt gratitude for Jesus’ forgiveness.

In this season of generous gifts to one another we celebrate the greatest gift of all: the once and for all gift of life. We don’t deserve this gift, not at all! But just when we were the least deserving Jesus came. Sometimes our own self-rightness gets in the way and we need to be broken and humbled. We would

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick De Graaf

not judge ourselves to be in the bigger debtor’s shoes as in the parable – after all “I don’t feel I’m as bad as others are”. But we judge incorrectly! Sinners have the same penalty: death!

When we contemplate and realize the depth of what Christ did, our attitudes change. Like King David or Ebenezer Scrooge, we turn around and open up the coffers of God’s gifts to us and make them available, and our hearts open up. We are ready to respond as we are enabled to express God’s care in a hurting world.

As I write this, former colleagues in Bangladesh are sending me pictures of families devastated by cyclone Sidr. My heart goes out to these people, and Edith and I are grateful that we can send gifts that support the work of Bangladeshi Christian volunteers from CRWRC project partners. These men and women partner staff are reaching out with food and other aid to 2500 families in the most severely affected area.

It is a privilege to respond with hope to people who do not see or experience God as a ‘Heavenly Father’ as we do. When people are in despair, life seems hopeless and there is a strong temptation to raise a fist at God and curse him. It is when people are in the valley of despair that faithful Christians need to be there to bring hope of a loving God who does care. It requires of us a generous attitude to help make it happen!

This Christmas when you give gifts to each other, match them with gifts for those who suffer – gifts for those who don’t know God as Father and Jesus as Saviour! It is the best gift that anyone can offer; it is the greatest gift! There is no gift on earth that has the eternal value that a gift of living water can give. It is the once and for all forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ – the Saviour of the world!

Stewardly tip: Be ready to act. Often we are caught unprepared for an opportunity to respond to a need that challenges us. If we are not ready, we are likely not to act or we will avoid the challenge or make some lame excuse. A friend of mine always has some food items in the trunk of her car because she finds herself parking in areas where there are a lot of street people. She always has a nutritious snack handy that she can give rather than giving a tooney. Still, always having a few tooneys in your pocket ready to give is a good thing, even if the cause might seem “iffy”! In most cases it is better to give than not to!

Readers: Share your ‘Stewardly Tips’ so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestions (by mail to *Christian Courier* or by email to my address below) and provide your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask you for more details.
Next issue: Taking care of business

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Zwemer ... continued from page 5

of an untold number of people are beyond measure. Zwemer left us a rich legacy of wisdom and insight into the religion of Islam – a topic that has assumed a new urgency for the West in an unprecedented way.

Much of his work is still available to us in the form of many articles, original books, archived volumes stored on the Internet, and biographies by J. Christy Wilson St.: *Apostle to Islam* (1953), and *Flaming Prophet* (1970). In addition, Roger S. Greenway, professor emeritus at Calvin Theological Seminary, has edited a volume of Zwemer’s writings under the title *Islam and the Cross*. (P&R Publishing Co., 2002)

Professor Lyle VanderWerff described Samuel Zwemer as “a pioneer missionary of the Reformed Church in America and mentor to many mission witnesses to Muslims,” who had challenged his readers with these words:

We must become Muslims to the Muslims if we would gain them for Christ. We must do this in the Pauline sense, without compromise, but with self-sacrificing sympathy and unselfish love. The Christian missionary must first of all know the religion of the people among whom he labors; ignorance of the Koran, the traditions, the life of Muhammad, the Muslim concept of Christ, the social beliefs.... ignorance of these is the chief difficulty in work among Muslims. (“Christian Witness to Our Muslim Friends,” IJFM, July-Sept. 1996, p.112)

The collection of Zwemer’s writings edited by Roger S. Greenway, *Islam and the Cross*, introduces us to the central issue in the meeting of Islam and Christianity, which is part 1 of this book. Part 2 is a fascinating discussion of the influence of Animism on Islam.

Zwemer writes that although the Koran presents Christ as one of the greater prophets, it does not recognize him as the Son of God, who came into the world to take upon himself the sins of the world. On the contrary, the Koran denies Christ’s deity and his atoning death and resurrection. It calls those who confess this central teaching of the Christian faith liars. (Surah 9:30)

In the chapter “Mohammed and Christ” Zwemer shows that Mohammed becomes in fact the Muslim Christ. Islam has coined two hundred and one titles of honour for Mohammad, including some that suggest he is more than human, such as: “The Forgiver, the Perfect, the Light, the Interceder, the Truth, the Mediator, the Holy One, the Pardoner of Sins....”

St. Paul wrote that the cross is a stumbling block to Jews and Gentiles, yet it is God’s way of reconciling sinful people with a Holy God. Zwemer urges his readers never on that account to consider Muslims our enemies, “but prove to them that we are their friends by showing not by our creed only, but by our lives, the power of the cross and its glory.” (p.53)

A composite religion

Although Islam presents itself as the latest and infallible revelation of God, Zwemer shows that the practice of many Muslims is heavily influenced by pre-Islamic pagan beliefs, notably Animism. The latter is the belief that inanimate objects possess souls or spirits, which can be evil or beneficent. Such spirits, both good and evil, are believed to be present also in all people.

Interestingly, in a discussion between Mohammad and his favourite wife Ayesha about just this topic, the prophet confirmed that evil spirits exist in all Muslims and non-Muslims, including himself. But he then assured Ayesha: “Yes but my Lord Most Glorious and Powerful has assisted me against him, so that he became a Muslim.” (This exchange was recorded by Abdullahesh-Shabli, in what Zwemer describes as “the most famous volume of all Muslim books on the doctrine of jinn [spirits].” p.95)

This collection of essays, preserved for us by Roger Greenway, first published between 1921 and 1941, contains a compelling message for us today. It gives us a glimpse of a godly man, thoroughly committed to the historic Christian faith and filled with the desire to show in word and deed the love of Christ to the Muslim world.

May this brief overview of the life and work of Samuel Zwemer whet your appetite to learn more from this wise and amazingly effective teacher.

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Story

The wordsmith's visit

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Mrs. Sienna visited our school for three days in the week before the Christmas holidays. Enough time for a death and a resurrection. If it hadn't been for her, I wouldn't have given my parents a Christmas present. Not after what happened to Blackie. But I guess I should start my story at the beginning like Mrs. Sienna taught us to and then you'll understand the ending.

I don't know how Mrs. Sienna found her way from Ontario to our little Christian school in Alberta. All of a sudden there she was in my Grade 8 class encouraging us to become wordsmiths and teaching us about conflicts and resolutions, plot twists and character motivation, and the Word and words.

She started out by saying, "I'm in love!" Some of the girls giggled, but I didn't and neither did the other guys. "I'm in love with the Word – Jesus – and with words," she explained. "Ever since I was a child, I wanted to be an author. I'll read a poem I wrote when I was eleven years old. After I read it, I'd like you to write a poem or a few paragraphs expressing your feelings about words. Be open and honest. Write your names on your papers so I can hand them back to you."

She cleared her throat and read:

What's the use of words?

They're no good as seeds for birds.

They're not crunchy like candy.

They're not very handy for fixing my bike or flying my kite.

So, what's the use of words?

I can't pile them up like building blocks or wear them in winter like woolly socks. I can't spread them on bread like butter and jam. They don't taste good like pineapple and ham. So, what's the use of words? I can't cuddle in them like a cosy bed or use them as a pillow for my head.

But when Mama tucks me in for the night, snuggles the blankets round me tight, and says, 'God loves you, and you're special to me!' Then I finally see what's the use of words.

I chewed my pen as Mrs. Sienna read her dumb poem. I could see by the way she kept on smiling that she liked cheerful compositions. I didn't want to dampen her enthusiasm by telling her what I really thought about words. But she had told us to be open and honest. So, I was. As I wrote, I leaned over my paper and cupped my arms around it.

"I'll randomly select several of your compositions and read them now. Then we'll briefly discuss them," Mrs. Sienna said. Over our groans, she added, "Don't worry. I won't mention any names."

I started to relax after Mrs. Sienna had read five poems, none of them mine.

She kept smiling because all of them praised words. "I have time to read one more," she said. Pulling a sheet of paper from the middle of the pile, she quickly

scanned it. Her smile faltered. Then she read my poem:

"What's the use of words?

Some people use words to make you feel small. Some people use words to make you fall. ('Fool!') ('Idiot!') ('Grow up!') ('Get over it!')

Can't you see? Words hurt! Words sting! So, they aren't worth anything!"

Mrs. Sienna paused. "That's an excellent poem because of its honesty. But do you think the author really believes that words are useless?"

I raised my hand to answer her because I didn't want any of the kids to think I wrote the poem. "Whoever wrote that doesn't know how great words are," I mumbled.

Mrs. Lawrenson, our teacher, caught my eye and then looked away. "It seems to me," she said, "that the author thinks words are useless because, instead of being used to encourage, they've been used to hurt him or her. However, he or she uses words effectively and displays a love for words, even while saying that words are useless."

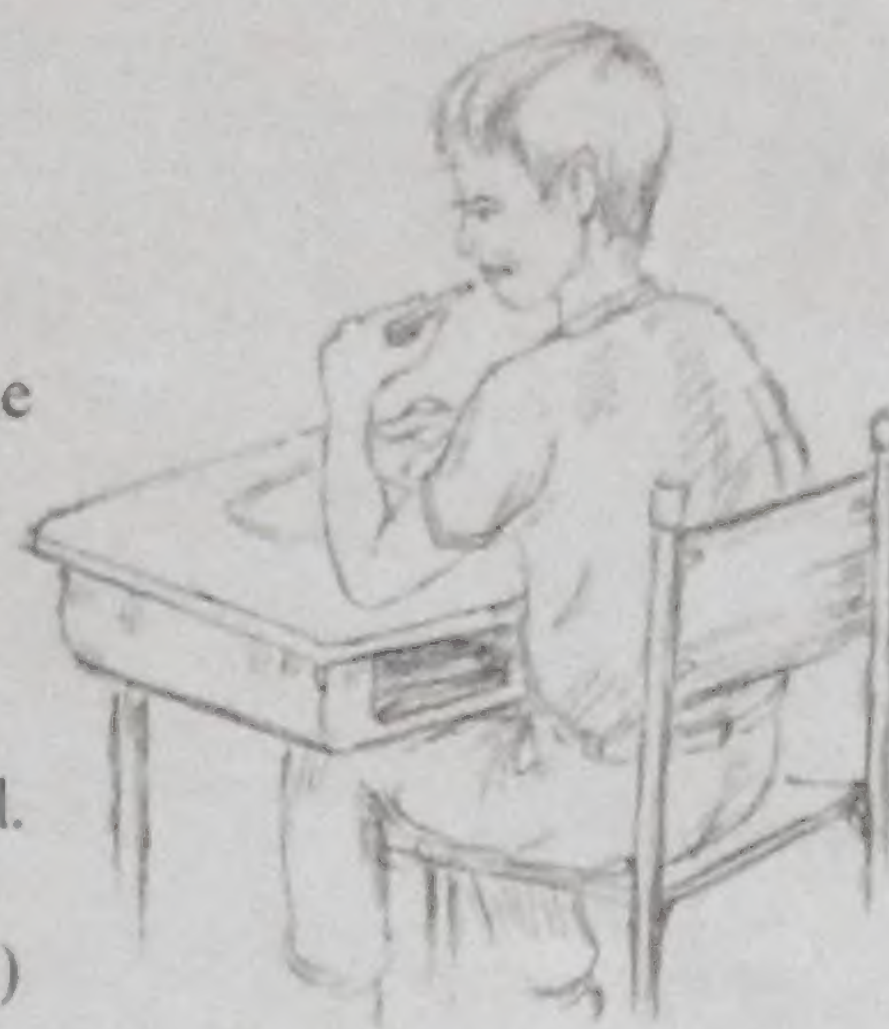
Did Mrs. Lawrenson know that I wrote the poem? I wondered. But how could she? Suddenly I remembered the Parent-Teacher-Student conference that Dad had reluctantly attended with me because Mom was stressed out and couldn't come. Dad had criticized my science project because I got a B instead of an A. I had left the room, angry at Dad, and stood in the hallway by the door. I heard Mrs. Lawrenson say, "Samuel is not a fool! He needs your praise, not your constant criticism!"

"I'm going to read two of my stories now," Mrs. Sienna said, interrupting my thoughts. "For your homework tonight I want you to write a fictional story. Keep several things in mind as you write it. Choose realistic conflicts. Explain what motivates your characters because, when you do so, your readers will care about them even if they don't agree with their actions. Make your endings ring true by avoiding quick-fix solutions. In other words, don't wrap your endings up like shiny gift packages. I prefer truth and grace endings."

Obviously we looked confused because Mrs. Sienna explained, "I prefer endings that show that the characters have struggled to understand the truth about their lives and are able to extend some form of grace to each other, no matter how imperfect it is."

I don't think many of the kids, including me, understood what she was talking about but no one dared to admit it.

All that day I dreaded going home. I knew what was waiting for me there. Blackie's empty cage. That morning on my way to the end of the driveway to wait for the school bus, I'd stopped at my rabbit's cage by the garage to see if he'd finally eaten his pellets – he hadn't eaten in days. When I saw the



gaping hole in the cage's chicken wire, my stomach had lurched. From the time I got him three

years ago, he'd pushed against the wire as if he wanted out of his home like I sometimes wanted out of mine. But he had never succeeded.

I had brushed the snow off the cage's wooden lid and peered into the dark tunnels that ran beneath it, hoping that he was hiding inside. Nothing! As I leaned into the cage, I noticed something strange about the chicken wire. It wasn't torn raggedly. Someone had cut it and allowed Blackie to escape!

I knew right away who did it. Dad! Hadn't he said that pets were a nuisance? And when he'd refused to allow me to have a dog, hadn't it only been because of Mom's pleading that he'd even allowed me to have a rabbit? Dad had cut the wire so that it would look like Blackie had escaped on his own, and he wouldn't be blamed.

I have to tell Mom, I had thought, but then I remembered that she had told me to get my own breakfast because she had a migraine headache and was going back to bed. When the bus driver had honked the horn, I ran down the snowy driveway following in Dad's fresh truck tire marks.

That afternoon Mom wasn't in the kitchen when I got home from school, but she'd left a note to tell me to let her rest till suppertime. As I ate my peanut butter cookies, I thought about what Mrs. Sienna had said about understanding characters' motivations. I didn't need to search any deeper for Dad's motivation. He was a mean man. Wasn't that motivation enough to take away something your kid loved?

After I finished eating my snack, I dressed in my winter gear, grabbed the snow shovel, and crossed the street to Bess and Paul's house to clear the old couple's driveway. I never minded doing it because each time when I was finished the job, they invited me in and gave me a snack and a few dollars.

When I scraped the last shovelful of snow to the side, Paul called from the doorway, "Come in out of the cold."

Inside, Bess said, "You're a gem, Samuel." Her words shouldn't have mattered so much to me, but they did. "How are you? And how are your Mom and Dad?" She asked.

"Fine," I said, like I always did when she asked. I didn't want Bess and Paul to know how mean Dad could be and how weak Mom usually was even though she tried hard to fight the weakness. Although they never asked me extra questions, I had a feeling that they knew a lot about what went on at our house.

"And how's Blackie doing?" Bess asked. She always asked me that question so I knew it was coming. Earlier as I had cleared their driveway, I had decided that I wouldn't tell

them about Blackie. I didn't know how to. How do you explain to kind people how mean some people can be?

I knew it was time to go when Bess got up to check the chicken casserole in the oven, but I didn't want to leave the warm kitchen.

When I got home, Mom – dressed in her ugly, old, purple housecoat – stood by the stove stirring something. Probably leftover soup from yesterday, I thought. I heard running tap water. Now was my chance to tell her before Dad came out of the bathroom.

"Mom," I said. "Blackie's gone! Someone cut the chicken wire!" The metal soup ladle clattered against the pan. She knows that Dad did it to hurt me, I thought. Just then Dad walked into the kitchen.

As usual, we ate in silence. As Dad slurped his soup, I imagined yelling in a strong, powerful voice, "Why did you cut the wire? What have you done to Blackie?" But suddenly the room felt very hot. Dad was very big and I was very small. I forced myself to eat the overcooked carrots and potato cubes that settled to the bottom of my bowl. As I choked them down, heat burned inside of me. I needed to know! I would know!

"Blackie?" I whispered. Then louder, "What did you do to him?"

What happened next shocked me. Dad pushed his chair away from the table and grumbled, "You deal with it!" He grabbed his bowl and spoon and tromped out of the kitchen.

Mom looked down. "It was my idea," she said, as her finger traced the table cloth's flowered pattern. "I wanted to protect you." She looked at me with pleading eyes. "I know rabbits, Samuel. Blackie was sick. You didn't want to see it, even though he hardly ate. I didn't want you to watch him die. I wanted you to remember him alive and well." She looked up. "So, I asked your Dad to cut the wire early this morning so you would think Blackie escaped. He took Blackie to the vet before you got up, and had him put down. I did it because I love you."

"Love?" I shouted. "What kind of love is that?"

"I've seen so much death, Samuel." Mom's voice pleaded with me to understand. "When I was a kid, my dog was hit by a tractor and died right in front of me. That was just a taste. The first loss. You know about the others. My mom and dad a few years ago. And then my sister last year."

Suddenly, I remembered the times when I was younger that Mom had clapped her hands over my eyes when we noticed a dead goldfinch in the garden or a dead raccoon at the side of the road. And the times we had passed accidents on the highway, she had said, "Don't look!" But I remembered, too, that the darkness of her hand forced over my eyes scared me more than looking.

I pushed my chair away from the table. In the hallway I grabbed my coat and boots and went outside. I crossed the road. By Bess and

See **Wordsmith** cont. on p.8

Story

Christmas right now

Daphne Simpkins

There wasn't much that worried Mildred Budge about Christmas anymore.

She knew Jesus.

Eternity was decided.

All the regular holiday festivities were scheduled and logically organized.

Miss Budge knew the date of the annual Lunch Bunch Christmas Brunch.

She knew the recipes for her requested contributions to various fellowship potluck meals.

Other than inventorying her pantry and making sure she had enough brown, white, and confectioner's sugar, there wasn't much more to buy.

She knew what she was giving to her friends: chocolate pecan homemade fudge.

Fran Applewhite got fudge. And Mildred received fingertip towels from her.

Belle Dearborn got fudge. And Mildred received a six-pack of small bottled Coca-

Colas. (They lasted her six months.)

Her mailman and her paperboy got fudge; she reliably received her mail and her morning paper year round.

Choosing the fudge-making day was the biggest variable of the holiday season each year, but Miss Budge wasn't worried. You only needed one good cold dry day so the candy would set. There was always a perfect day sometime after Thanksgiving and before Christmas.

This year she was more concerned about what the newest member of their Lunch Bunch, Anne Henry, might do next.

Anne Henry liked to do things that the other ladies didn't do. She had ridden in an air balloon last summer. (No one worried about breaking a hip and landing in a nursing home did that).



Anne had danced with a crowd of teenagers at the country club last New Year's Eve. (No one worried about her dignity did that either).

Two days ago, Anne had shown up at Mildred's back door with a nice-sized sack of pecans. "These are for you, Mildred. When you make that first batch of your famous fudge, will you remember me?"

"Where did you get these?" Mildred asked. They weren't from the Tucker Pecan Co. She eyed them suspiciously. Foreign pecans.

"I picked them up on my morning walk. They were like jewels laid at my feet," Anne confessed. "I probably saved the lives of some squirrels. Some of those pecans were dangerously close to the street."

"You picked up pecans from other people's yards?" Mildred asked incredulously.

"Right near the curb. I waved at all the homeowners, and they all waved back. They're absolutely delicious," Anne promised. "I ate a few."

Then, she made that little wave she had used on the dance floor and from the air balloon and power-walked away, calling over her shoulder, "Merry Christmas, our Mildred!"

The pecans had stayed untouched on the kitchen table while Mildred tried not to worry about the ethics of using possibly stolen pecans. It was her day to inventory her pantry.

Then, after that job was done and still ignoring the pecans, Mildred worked on her calendar, writing additional chores underneath her social engagements, because one didn't just show up somewhere—one had to prepare to get there. It's what made the Christmas season work.

On a separate sheet of paper then, she made additional notes: wash the car and practice the piano.

Mildred had been practicing playing Christmas carols since the pianist three years ago had not shown up for the candle-light service. Fearing he would have to lead the singing a capella, the preacher had called out to the congregation in what sounded like a cry for a doctor, "Is there a pianist in the house?"

If her sweet minister had only used a different word Mildred would have marched heroically right to the piano and saved the day, but Mildred Budge did not think of herself as either a pianist or a hero.

Anne Henry didn't stop to think of herself at all. She had simply gone over to the piano and hit as many wrong notes as right ones, and people had good-naturedly sung louder to cover her mistakes. What a joyful noise!

When the service was finished, the preacher escorted Anne Henry to the front of the congregation, bowed respectfully, and lightly kissed the top of Anne Henry's hand.

When all of the candles had been extinguished and no one should have been able to see, Anne Henry had pressed that kissed hand to her cheek and blinked back tears.

Since then, Mildred Budge had practiced playing Christmas carols throughout the year in case the preacher ever needed help again.

She had been dancing, too. Mildred danced during the commercials played on TV. She was trying to build up her dancing stamina in case the opportunity arose again this year.

It probably wouldn't.

Chances to dance and save the preacher didn't come around too often.

Mildred sat down heavily at her kitchen table. Her hand toyed with the bag of pecans. One of the plump nuts peeked out of its shell. Mildred pinched it off. Tasted it. Tender. Sweet. Perfect. A jewel. "She'd have been an ingrate not to have picked them up, if they were right in front of her," Mildred confirmed, shelling a whole pecan. She popped it in her mouth. Delicious!

This year's fudge would be the best ever! Mildred dialed Anne's number.

Anne picked up the phone immediately. (Anne was famous for not screening calls.) Miss Budge exclaimed, "This is the day that the Lord has made. Let's rejoice and be glad in it!"

"You are making the Christmas fudge!" Anne deduced instantly. Before Mildred could explain, Anne said, "I'll come right over and scrape the pot!"

"Now?" Mildred asked tremulously, looking around the kitchen.

Making the candy was not on her day's schedule. The nuts weren't even shelled. She hadn't even seriously prayed over her ingredients. Was rain predicted?

"You are giving me Christmas right now, aren't you?" Anne pressed, and there was excitement in her voice. It was the same tone she had used to call down greetings from the air balloon. It was the same exuberant joy that flooded the dance floor. It was the same glow of enthusiasm in her eyes when Annie had brought the pecans and said, "Mildred, these are for you."

Tears sprang to Mildred Budge's eyes. It was the first time anyone had ever called time spent with Mildred, Christmas.

As if she were saying yes to the preacher's cry for a pianist, Mildred Budge replied bravely, her feet doing a little jig at the prospect of accepting this unplanned gift of the season, "Yes! Come on over, Anne. Let's you and I have Christmas right now."

Wordsmith ...cont. from p. 7

Paul's door, I hesitated. How could I explain everything to them? But how could I keep it all to myself?

Paul opened the door. "Samuel, what are you doing here? Come in!" He placed his gentle hand on my shoulder.

Sitting by the table, I told them the whole story. They didn't interrupt me. They didn't make excuses for Mom and Dad. When I had finished speaking, Bess sighed. "Human love," she said.

"So imperfect and inadequate," Paul said.

"But it's all we have to give each other," Bess replied.

"People are complicated," Paul said. "Sometimes the love in their hearts comes out in strange ways."

I didn't totally understand what they were getting at, but their gentle wisdom and compassion filled the room, and I took some of it home with me.

Later in bed, I suddenly sat up. My writing assignment! I had completely forgotten about it. What could I write about? I remembered what Mrs. Sienna had said. Write about what you know. Be honest. Develop a strong conflict, characters with convincing motivations, and a realistic resolution.

So, I did it. I changed my name. Samuel became Harry. And Dad and Mom were still Dad and Mom. I wrote my story. The chicken wire cut. Blackie gone. Blaming Dad. The twist in the plot. Mom's motivation.

But I couldn't think of a resolution. Then I remembered what Bess and Paul had said. I decided to let Harry speak their words to the Mom in the story: "Human love is inadequate and imperfect, but it's all we have to give each other. I know, Mom, that people are complicated. Sometimes they show their love in strange ways."

Maybe it wasn't the most realistic resolution, but I was tired and my head hurt. All I wanted to do was sleep.

The next day in class, Mrs. Sienna asked, "How did you enjoy writing your stories?" Of

course, most of the kids said they loved it. I tried to share their enthusiasm, but I couldn't. Writing the story had exhausted me.

"I appreciate your enthusiasm," Mrs. Sienna said. "I'll read them later today and give you feedback. Before we discuss how to write nonfiction and short dramas, I'd like to tell you about my childhood Christmas tradition. Because I loved to write, each year I gave my parents a story. I placed a copy beneath the tree and my mom read it to the family after we opened presents. Would you like to begin that tradition in your families?"

Dumb idea, I thought, and forgot about it.

On Christmas Eve I tiptoed in the darkness down the stairs to the living room, hoping Mom and Dad wouldn't hear me. As I placed an envelope beneath the Christmas tree, my hand trembled and I almost ran back to my room with it. Then I remembered Mrs. Sienna's comments on my story. In bright red ink she had written, "Samuel, you are a budding wordsmith. You tried to do everything that I taught you. I particularly liked your resolution to the conflict. It's realistic, yet hopeful—a resurrection of love after a sad death. A truth and grace ending! I encourage you to give this story to your parents as a present. When they read it, they will be proud of you."

Suddenly something clattered to the floor. I picked up the silver-plated, star-shaped ornament my parents had given to me for my first Christmas, and read the words engraved on it: "For our precious Samuel. Love, Mom and Dad."

Taking the ornament, I got my coat and boots, and went outside. Gusts of snow blew into my face as I walked to Blackie's cage. Through the hole in the chicken wire, I placed the ornament inside. Snow blew over the engraved words. But it didn't erase them. I ran back to the house and got into bed.

Tomorrow Mom will read the story, I thought. And maybe Dad will, too, if he feels like it. I don't expect everything to be better. I just want them to know that I'm trying to understand them.

Van Ruler

The good news of Christmas for the world

A. A. van Ruler

Nowadays we like to draw hope from the slogan "It's all about the worldly meaning of the gospel." Practically speaking, this usually means that we ask whether the gospel and faith make any positive contributions toward addressing the problems and the needs of modern man.

Often behind this slogan there's a theoretical viewpoint that boils down to this: traditional Christianity is arraigned for concealing the substance of the gospel in a separate sphere called "religion". The issues are then hidden ones – the inwardness of the soul or the eternity of heaven. But according to the Bible, so the argument goes, it's about the concrete reality of life on this earth. It is here that faith should mean something. If it has no meaning here, then it has no meaning at all.

In addition to this practical and theoretical viewpoint, there is inevitably added an existential viewpoint. It can be put this way: believing is a matter of living, of doing, of involvement with the world. It is not a matter of talk. Nor is it a matter of thought. And certainly not a matter of feeling. Faith issues in an existence of worldly deeds.

These notions follow from a huge assumption – namely that the world is worth the trouble. The gospel is, thus, measured in terms of what significance it has for our worldly reality. Only then, according to this train of thought, is it worth the trouble.

From where do we get the confidence that this is so? Why should I exert myself to address the needs of humanity? What guarantee is there that it is meaningful to seek to solve humanity's problems? Is it really better to exist than to commit suicide? Is the earth better than heaven? Is being better than nothingness? Is the body better than the soul? Is social engagement better than mysticism?

Most would answer yes to such questions without hesitating for a moment. Or actually they don't answer them at all, for they don't even ask these questions. They simply proceed from the assumption that this is the way things are. A hermit who spends his life seeking his own soul and God is considered an eccentric. While a social worker who goes to work in an undeveloped region is considered to be much more in touch with the meaning of human existence.

During the Christmas season it is good to pause before this pressure of modern opinion. Are things really as we think they are? Why? Why is my neighbor important? Why is it worth the trouble to work for the betterment of the world? Is the world itself meaningful?

These are truly what we call "the final or ultimate questions". Our experience and reasoning, facts and evidences don't take us very far toward addressing these questions. The sciences, for example, contribute nothing toward answering them. The sciences are involved in the betterment of the world. Even the assumption that scientific study of the world is worthwhile is an assumption. If it weren't true, then the very meaning of science falls away.

When it comes to the ultimate questions, man must make a choice. And he does so matter-of-factly. However, he usually forgets that this choice is a matter of faith. He acts as if it's self-evident. But this is self-deception.

When our critical senses are fully awakened, we can no longer be content with this self-deception. As people of the world, we must be unafraid to wholly see ourselves as being-in-the-world. This is, after all, finally a matter of faith.

Anyone who pushes on to further illuminate and deepen



Rembrandt's Adoration of the Magi

this faith choice will inevitably arrive at the major world religions and philosophical systems. Do these affirm the idea that the world is worthwhile?

I can't in this short article review all the major religions and philosophies. But I can confidently assert that nowhere else do we find such an emphasis on one's neighbor and the world as in Christianity and in those philosophies that bear the stamp of the Christian faith.

It is the good news of Christmas that is the source of this heavy accent. The message of the incarnation – that the eternal Word has assumed human flesh as a historical fact – endows the world with enormous significance. And it is for this reason that we must not only speak of the worldly significance of the gospel. If we leave it at that, we turn everything upside-down. We must rather speak of the evangelical significance of the world.

By this I mean the significance that the gospel gives to the world. In simple words, the gospel is this: the time is fulfilled. That is to say, the time has been made full. It is no longer empty, useless and futile, and therefore it is not meaningless. What has filled it? Salvation! There is redemption, liberation. Humanity and the world are now able to live – even through all evil, even when that evil is called sin. We are able to live even through corruption, even when that corruption is called death. Life has been set

free, that is, it has been translated into eternal life. This is why it is wonderful just to be here – for all eternity – before the face of God.

This applies not just to the individual. It is also true of human community. Even for the entire human race. The kingdom of God is and is being built here on earth. It has a destination. The eschaton, the future is what draws us forward and the completion of the historical process. There are social ideals. There is a vista overlooking the meaning of history.

The church is the scarlet cord that runs through the story. She is the vehicle that carries the gospel of salvation that has come to us in Jesus

Christ. She hands it on in the preaching of the Word from one generation to the next. This is the apostolic tradition. Church history is mission history. This does not contain the meaning of world history, but it does illuminate it. It is not Christ who is the meaning of the historical process but the Kingdom of God.

This entire matter of giving meaning to life and to the world is worked out in the Christian faith with one last accent. It all counts before the face of God. We may even see it as an act and gift of God: he himself – in his Son – has entered our time. The incarnation! The Word become flesh! Eternity in time!

These images express the meaning of the world the way no other religion or philosophy does. But it isn't only God who is at work. Humanity too has been set to work. Our actions have been filled with meaning. Now we know – through Christ – what is true and what is good. And we want that, and we are able to do it. Through the Spirit. We are set on the path to the Kingdom. History has been turned into the one great pilgrimage of mankind. We are seeking the true fatherland, and it is the earth as it has been liberated by Christ.

From: A.A. van Ruler, Blij zijn als kinderen: een boek voor volwassenen.

Christmas monologues

Night watch

Keep to the shadows, son: the heavens conspire against us. Look at that star – it's bright as a full moon! Yes, son, our deeds demand darkness – darkness like the wild creation before God spoke light.

But the heavens have long ago abandoned us to our own destiny. Yahweh has withdrawn himself from his people because they heed the decrees of Roman gods. Our leaders and merchants have embraced the light of Rome and spread it over the nation like a blanket that puts us all to sleep. The sweet shalom of Rome rises and sets on us every day like a false sun. Now even our last refuge – darkness is being invaded by their light.

I took you along tonight, Simon, to learn the texture of the night. It's this that now surrounds us, my son. It bears us upon its mysterious depths like the sea. Your mother doesn't understand that we must now blend with the darkness. She makes of herself a refuge, a tent lit by oil lamps to keep the darkness at bay. But we men cannot live at peace in her tent. She would have you take over her father's fishing boat and make your livelihood catching fish in the Sea of Galilee, tracing the ancient paths back and forth to Jerusalem and bringing offerings to the priests.

Getting drowsy, Simon? Rest. The sand is still warm with the heat of the sun – stretch out and close your eyes a while. Sleep. Joshua should join us soon.

Pew! Smell that? How I detest the sickly smell of stupid sheep. Our rendezvous has almost been overrun by a flock of sheep. Listen to the pitiful bleating of those most helpless of beasts. I wonder what has disturbed them....

Maybe your mother is right: this is no job for righteous men – preying upon our own people. I admit, I detest myself at times. But our own people act like sheep and we ought to be a nation of Joshuas, of Gideons, of Samsons. They have forgotten that we are the chosen people of Yahweh. Did he lead us out of Egypt to become slaves in the Land of Promise? Look, down below



in the valley: there they lie like sheep, another flock of pilgrims driven by Caesar's decrees. All Israel scuttles to and fro at the word of almighty Caesar.

What visions I've dreamt, Simon – not for myself, but for you and yours. And it'll happen. As sure as Yahweh is holy and just! What I wouldn't give to be in your shoes: to see his kingdom established, to ride in triumph through the sacred streets of a free Jerusalem, to pay no more taxes to that pagan abomination called Caesar. Just to walk in Jerusalem without seeing that Roman eagle!

Simon? It's alright. Sleep. Perhaps you'd sooner dream your own heroic adventures than act in the seedy reality of your father's dreams.... Or do you dream your mother's sensible dreams?

Awake, Simon! Look, that star – it's vibrating. Lying here I feel like Jacob at Bethel waiting for a ladder to drop from that brightness. If only the darkness would take configuration – a shape, a word. Sometimes my soul seems on the verge of obliteration. We dream of kingship but act like criminals and bandits, stalking in the deep of night the very people we would liberate.

Your mother was over-wrought tonight, and I silenced her. She was worried about you. We call ourselves Sons of David, and we tell our victims, "You willingly pay tax to Caesar, now pay joyfully to your liberators. Sons of David!" We scurry from rock to rock, cave to cave, despised like snakes. Our people appeal to the Roman commanders to protect them – from us. And we're the butt of Roman jokes: "Invisible soldiers of an invisible king in an invisible kingdom."

Better perhaps to catch real fish and feed hungry bellies in Galilee. You could do worse; you could be a shepherd, for instance, like those dolts huddled around the fire back there. Bound like Roman slaves to the dumbest, most pitiful creatures in the world. Ba-a-a! Bloody sheep! But, aah, Simon, my son, how often haven't I envisioned you riding in triumph through the gates of Jerusalem!

Maybe this star augurs something. The whole night sky and the hills are suffused with the glitter of dreams; the night itself seems a dream of that shimmering star.... Joshua? Is that you?

Perhaps we've lost him after that shameful farce last time. I wasn't sure I wanted to come back again either – except for you, Simon.

With a few quiet words, an ordinary woman, big with child routed us, the Sons of David. She spoke – and suddenly the night was all confusion. Then I was seized by a moment of intense clarity, and we slunk off into the darkness ashamed to meet one another's eyes. That's why I took you with me tonight, Simon. In you I thought to take along my dream, my strength. But here you lie, asleep again, dreaming of fishing boats no doubt.

Strange, again I feel the same trembling intensity concentrating itself in the night. Simon, wake up! The sky – it's very fabric is tearing from top to bottom. That bleating – it's my own soul crying out like a newborn child. Oh, my God, the star – the night sky, it's disintegrating – Simon, wake up, Simon, see the light – my God, my God, I'm blind, I'm blind. See, see, see the light I see.



Harry
der Nederlanden



The Innkeeper

Yes, yes, this is the place! What of it? Yes, it was me who answered the door that night. Listen, I know my rights; this inn is mine, and my father owned it before me. We provide clean beds and good service. But we have a right to choose our clients, don't we. And after what happened with Herod can you blame me?

Did you talk to the owner of the new place up the road? He has three times the room I do, and I'll bet you he shut the door on them too. I treated them, well, if not with charity, at least with civility. It was my wife, you know, who steered them to Isaia's shed – her being a big as she was. Maybe you should speak to that husband of hers: it was him that dragged her all the way out here, remember – knowing full well that she was due any time. But, then, what can you expect from those hicks in Nazareth? The Romans say, Jump, and they look for a cliff to jump from.

Yeah, yeah, I know the decree, the decree. But the law isn't heartless, you know, not even Roman law. That carpenter – he hadn't even thought of an exemption. You know what I think? I think he had something to hide, Them being newlyweds and all. You know the younger generation. The old women back home would've been counting the days, and there would have been jokes at his expense.

Christmas monologues

The lost donkey

I didn't know where Nazareth was, I admit. I am a simple man. That donkey – it was the only one I ever owned. What made me give it to that couple from Nazareth I don't know. Magda won't let me forget it either. No, no, not that – she's not the nagging, resentful type. It's the... The strangeness, the unexpectedness of it that makes her wonder. "Whatever possessed you?" she asks, shaking her head. It was somewhat out of character, I admit. As a rule I am a careful man; perhaps even a little tight-fisted. Every now and then she still looks at me and asks, "What made you do it? For months you talk of nothing else but getting a donkey, and suddenly, poof! You give it away. 'Here you go,' he says to perfect strangers. 'Take my donkey, and God bless.'" She shakes herself in disbelief, laughing quietly to herself.



The first time I told her, she threw her skirt over her head. I thought she was about to start wailing or moaning. Not her. She was laughing. Her sides shook, her bosom shook, she shook all over. First I was relieved, but then I was miffed. No one likes to be taken for a fool. But then she just hugged me, held me, like she hadn't for some time. Women are funny – you buy her a donkey to make her happy, but she gets all upset instead. Then you give it away and, well, just listen: that's her singing in the garden. She hasn't done that in years. "A donkey!" she cried when I first brought it home. "Am I an old woman that I need a donkey to ride? There's nothing wrong with my legs, Moishe. No matter how high I ride, Moishe, they will still pity me and call me barren Magda." No, even though she did ride it, the donkey did not make her happy. But listen to her now: she's been like this ever since, in spite of the terrible slaughter. Serene – that's what the Rabbi called her – serene. At last she's at peace.

When Magda told the Rabbi what I had done, he said, "He who gives his ass to one in need will never want another steed."

"Sure!" snorted Jeb, my brother. "But did he give them his donkey? Not him. And he has two of them." Jeb's been down on rabbis and priests of late – with reason. The slaughter of his only son, his firstborn, cut out his heart, his soul. But his wife has given birth again and new life returns to him. For months after the slaughter he was one of the living dead. If it had not been for Magda, he and his wife would have sunk into the earth, buried themselves. "God will give you many more sons," the Rabbi told him, "in place of the one you lost."

"Children are not donkeys, Rabbi," he snapped. You cannot replace one with another!" But day by day his bitterness fades like the scars he slashed on his breast that woeful day. The child is healing him. The other day I overheard him asking Magda, "Remember that couple from Nazareth with the infant? Do you really think that was the one Herod was after?"

I didn't hear Magda's answer, but I know she does. "A strange God," muttered my brother, "who lets my son and many more die that one may live. I hope with all my heart that he really was the promised one, and that one day he will come riding out of that desert with blood-stained garments and a sword of fire and justice to nail Herod's hide to the gates of Jerusalem!"

But Jeb," Magda answered quietly, "would that bring back even one of the slaughtered children? You know it wouldn't. Quite the opposite. The Romans would come and slay even more of our sons. Ten for every one of theirs." Life is riddled with strange equations, cruel exchanges, dark substitutions. I traded my donkey for ... nothing, but got back Magda. What secret exchange did Magda make? I don't know... So much darkness, and yet there's light.

One day the Rabbi caught me standing here, just as I am now, looking out into the desert. "Tell me, Moishe," he asked. "What are you looking for? Do you also expect your donkey to come trotting back out of the wilderness carrying another Joshua or Gideon?" His eyes twinkled, but he wasn't just teasing. There are those who ... but I'm no mad visionary. I'm just a simple man. It is enough for me that Magda is singing again like a young girl, like when she was a bride filed with hope. God willing, one day all the mothers of Israel will one day sing like her.



Besides, the place really was almost full. I tell you the truth. Sure, I was holding some rooms, but we had some big shots coming, big at least for Bethlehem. A couple of our local boys have mad it big, you know – both well-know rabbis. One grew up just around the corner, a clever boy bursting with wit, he was. I always said he'd go far.

No innkeeper in his right mind would've taken them in. You can't take the chance. Some of them are laid up for weeks afterward, disturbing the peace and taking up space – and space is money. If she'd been laid up here 40 days, you think I'd have got my money from that carpenter from Nazareth? Don't kid yourself, those people don't know what it's like to run a city inn. It's a business, not a charity.

Let me tell you, if I had to do it all over again, I'd do exactly the same thing. After that gruesome business with Herod's butchers ... I shudder to think what might have happened has I been fool enough to open my inn to them. The folks her would've blamed me for the slaughter sure as my name is Ben-Obed. Aah, look, even now it brings tears to my eyes to think of the close call we had! Thank God I had nothing to do with that cursed couple. I might have ended my days homeless and God-forsaken, without a place to call my own – like those poor shepherds on the hills yonder, living with stinking, noisy animals.

Isaia's shed? No, it's no longer there. Someone leveled it soon afterward. Maybe Isaia himself. He lost his youngest that night, you know – even though the child was three years old. Those soldiers were none too careful. That's what they call Roman civilization. Bloody barbarians, that's what they are. Superstition turns them into fools: to think that some miserable kid born in a shed was somehow to become our king! Hilarious! I'd laugh till my belly ached if it wasn't so sad. Blind fools! What ignorance. May God send light into their darkened souls. But what's the use? They wouldn't recognize the Messiah himself if he came knocking on their doors in the middle of the night.

Harry
derNederlanden

Harry der Nederlanden

Carols

The Gospel according to four Christmas Carols

Marian Van Til

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

Words: This hymn was originally a medieval Catholic Christmas song, "Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen," first published in 1588. It was revised for Protestant use and as such first appeared in Michael Praetorius's church music volumes *Musae Sioniae* (*Music of Zion*), 1605-1612.

Music: ES IST EIN ROS' from *Alte Geistliche Kirchengesäng*, Cologne, 1599; harmonized by Michael Praetorius, 1609 (This tune is also used for "A Great and Mighty Wonder.")

1. *Lo, how a rose e'er blooming
From tender stem hath sprung!
From Jesse's lineage coming
As men of old have sung
It came, a floweret bright,
Amid the cold of winter
When half spent was the night*
2. *Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
The Rose I have in mind
With Mary we behold it,
The Virgin mother kind
To show God's love aright
She bore to us a Savior
When half spent was the night*

The Old Testament Israelites were in a self-inflicted sorry state when God called Isaiah to be his prophet. They had all but forgotten their righteous forebears, among them the great King David, shepherd-son of Jesse – the great King David because he was the Lord's friend – "a man after my own heart," said God himself.

Isaiah's Israel was but a remnant, a mere stump, of its former self. They accommodated spinelessly to the God-denying nations around them, forgetting who had brought them out of bondage, who had fed them in the wilderness, who had raised up David's line of kings, who had covenanted with them and had kept – and always keeps – his promises. Thus, Isaiah brought many words of judgment. He had to; God is just. But God is also merciful. And though they jilted him, and we jilt him, over and over, he still cherishes his people.

And so Isaiah spoke – still speaks – God's greatest promise and greatest mercy of all: from the compost heap of that near-dead, hewn-down stump of Jesse would grow a tender shoot, a Rose whose delicate brightness would cheer the darkest night, the bleakest winter. And not just cheer, but save. It would take almost 800 years, but it would happen. Finally, a young Virgin bore that Rose. And 2000 years later, with Mary, we still behold him.

Related reading: Isaiah 11; Isaiah 35*; Romans 15:1-13. *In the King James Version, Isa. 35:1 refers to a *rose* blossoming in the desert; the NIV uses the word "crocus."



Rembrandt's Holy Family c. 1645

those shepherds, nor we today, but you too, earth, must respond. So when you hear the angels' message, Rejoice, mountains! Clap in glee, oceans! Sing with the angels over and over: "Glory to God in the highest and peace to us on earth."

Because he has come to ransom us all, what response can we have but to adore him, this Bethlehem infant who is also our Savior, Lord and King. When his Kingdom finally reveals itself an everlasting Kingdom, all our human idols will die (as if they were alive in the first place!), all wrong will disintegrate, all error (including our misapprehensions about him) will decay. And he shall reign forever and ever.

Related reading:

John 1:1-14;
Revelation 19:1-18; Psalm 47;
Psalm 98.

A Great and Mighty Wonder

Words: "Mega kai paradoxon Thaumata," St. Germanus (634-734), 734; translated into English by John Mason Neale, 1862.

Music: ES IST EIN ROS' from *Alte Geistliche Kirchengesäng*, Cologne, 1599; harmonized by Michael Praetorius, 1609. ("Lo, How a Rose," uses the same music.)

1. *A great and mighty wonder, a full and holy cure:
The virgin bears the Infant with virgin honor pure!
Repeat the hymn again: "To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men!"*
2. *The Word becomes incarnate and yet remains on high,
And cherubim sing anthems to shepherds from the sky.
Repeat the hymn again: "To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men!"*
3. *While thus they sing your Monarch, those bright angelic bands,
Rejoice, ye vales and mountains, ye oceans, clap your hands.
Repeat the hymn again: "To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men!"*

4. *Since all He comes to ransom, by all be He adored,
The Infant born in Bethl'em, the Savior and the Lord.
Repeat the hymn again: "To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men!"*

5. *All idol forms shall perish, and error shall decay;
And Christ shall wield His scepter, our Lord and God for aye.
Repeat the hymn again: "To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men!"*

How immense is this thought, how wonderful: that a human baby, inexplicably born of a virgin, should also be the King of kings! The Word – that Word which and whom the Apostle John says was *with* God and *was* God – has become flesh. Embodied like us, with hands and head and heart. And yet... yet he remains God on high.

The word about this Word is brought by cherubim, bright angels dancing in the sky, singing to shepherds (yes, sheep herders). The angels sing of a Savior. That Savior is also a King, our King – and even your King, creation. This is such Good News that not just

Carols

Break Forth, O Beauteous Heav'nly Light

Words: Johann Rist (1607-1667), 1641; translated from German by John Troutbeck (1832-1899).

Music: ERMUNTRE DICH, melody by Johann Schop, 1641; used and harmonized by Johann Sebastian Bach in Part 2 of his *Christmas Oratorio*, 1734, the cantata for the second day of Christmas.

*Break forth, O beauteous heav'nly light,
And usher in the morning;
Ye shepherds, shrink not with affright,
But hear the angel's warning.
This child, now weak in infancy,
Our confidence and joy shall be,
The power of Satan breaking,
Our peace eternal making.*

Biblical folk, including those shepherds at our Lord's birth, tremble with fright when they suddenly meet up with angels. We, no doubt, would like to think we'd be braver (if only we could have such a sublime experience). But fear induced by holy awe is never misplaced. And we have had a much greater visitation: God-With-Us in a way those biblical angel-viewers did not know, could not know, even though some of them saw him Incarnate as we have not.

God's angelic messengers seem to reflect fragments of his glory; literally reflect: they shine, they dazzle, just as human Moses's face shone (painfully, for the onlookers) after he had been in God's presence. Perhaps that's partly why it is not inappropriate that the angels' message to the shepherds should be described in this exuberant chorale as a "warning" even while being "tidings of great joy."

The human-born Savior about whom the angels brought news did not, like the angels he created, merely reflect the light of God's glory. He was and is that glory. He is that Light (un-comprehended by the world), the Light which broke forth into our world and ushered in an incomparable morning; a dawning which has dissipated Satan's darkness, breaking his foul grip on us. Or as another poet put it, using a sheep-fold image which any caretaker of animals would intimately understand:

*This little Babe so few days old
is come to rattle Satan's fold
All hell doth at His presence quake
Though He Himself for cold do shake
For is this weak unarmed, wise
The gates of hell He will surprise.**

And the result of that war is our peace

Related reading: Luke 2:8-14, chap. 10: 17-20; Isaiah 58:6-10.

*"This little Babe" is Stanza 5 of an eight-stanza poem "New Heaven, New War" by Robert Southwell (1561?-1595). The main image in Southwell's powerful poem comes from warfare: "With tears he

fight and wins the field./His naked breast stands for a shield;/His battering shot are babish cries./His arrows made of weeping eyes./His martial ensigns cold and need./And feeble flesh his warrior's steed./His camp is pitched in a stall,/His bulwark but a broken wall./The crib his trench, hay stalks his stakes./Of shepherds he his muster makes;/And thus as sure his foe to wound./The angels' trumps alarum sound./My soul with Christ join thou in fight./Stuck to the tents that he hath pight;/Within his crib is surest ward./This little babe will be thy guard./If thou wilt foil thy foes with joy./Then flit not from the heavenly boy."

Twentieth century English composer Benjamin Britten uses these stanzas in his *Ceremony of Carols*, made the more effective by the use of innocent-sounding boys' voice.



Bartolome Esteban Murillo The Adoration of the Shepherds

In the Bleak Midwinter

Words: Christina Georgina Rossetti, 1872; appeared posthumously in *Poetical Works*, 1904

Music: CRANHAM, Gustav Theodore Holst, 1906; or the tune by Harold Darke (1888-1976), 1911

1. *In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow;
In the bleak midwinter, long ago*
2. *Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain
Heaven and earth shall flee away, when he comes to reign
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ*
3. *Enough for him, whom Cherubim Worship night and day,
A breastful of milk, And a mangerful of hay;
Enough for him, whom Angels Fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel Which adore*
4. *Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;
But His mother only, in her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the beloved with a kiss*
5. *What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.*

Continued on page 14

Christmas

Christmas memories will live on

Lisa M. Petsche

Christmas at Grandma's – widowed as long as my kids have known her – has always been a special time. Numerous traditions are an integral part of the experience.

Preparations get underway early in December, beginning with decorating. All of the grandchildren usually pitch in. Their favourite decorative items include silver garland for draping around the living room mirror, a wooden reindeer for the fireplace hearth, a huge, inflatable candy cane and a Santa face that hangs on the wall. Everything has its appointed spot, which never varies.

On top of the buffet goes the winning seasonal entry our eldest daughter submitted to a children's greeting card contest. Christmas portraits of the grandkids are arranged around it, some dating back quite a few years. It's always fun to look them over.

Then there are the strings of traditional, multi-coloured lights; they frame the picture window that faces the street.

My kids especially enjoy assembling and decorating Grandma's "fake" tree, partly because we don't get ours from the tree farm until later in the month. The assortment of ornaments never changes; virtually all date back to my husband's childhood.

Baking sessions take place in mid-December. Short-breads, the most labour intensive treats, are made in a couple of different shapes, using special tools; festive candy beads are sprinkled on top. No-bake haystacks – a mix of chow mein noodles and peanuts coated in chocolate – are another seasonal favourite. As Grandma's vision has declined, the kids have taken over more of the work. Several batches of each recipe are made, to enable sharing.

The big Christmas feast is held at Grandma's house without fail. Although her kitchen is small, she has the largest dining room set and the nicest dishes, and enjoys hosting. With both leaves in the table, she can accommodate a good-sized group. All of us come bearing menu items.

The sight of gifts cascading out from under the tree never fails to take the kids' breath away when they enter Grandma's living room on Christmas Day. They crawl around to check the names on each decoratively wrapped item and play guessing games.

After dinner the eagerly awaited gift exchange takes place. It takes some time for everything to be opened, admired and passed around. By then we're ready for dessert, enjoying the treats made in Grandma's kitchen, along with an assortment of nuts and candies. Afterwards the adults chat and clean up while the kids play with their gifts and each other. Everyone is contentedly exhausted by the time the evening wraps up.

Unfortunately, last Christmas turned out to be the last one like this. Grandma died unexpectedly a short time later.

We've made it through almost a whole year now without her, including various special occasions: Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day, Thanksgiving and numerous birthdays and anniversaries. Christmas is the final frontier – and the one we've been most anxious about.

It's been hard figuring out how to approach it. Our celebrations will involve a mix of old and new. One of the new things is a special angel ornament on our tree, in memory of Grandma. It joins the angel memorializing the baby we lost a number of years ago.

We "inherited" Grandma's artificial tree, and made a place for it in our family room. The kids insisted we still get a real one, though; it's in the usual corner of the living room.

The location of our extended family gathering will be different, and will probably rotate from year to year. Dinner will be buffet-style, since none of us had space in our home to accommodate Grandma's dining room table. The usual Christmas desserts, made just the way Grandma taught us, will be served on her special dishes.



Sean and Grandma

Afterwards we'll look through photos from past Christmases, many taken last year thanks to my sister-in-law, who was eager to try out her new digital camera. We'll reminisce about the good times and, I trust, experience gratitude for them even in the midst of our grief.

There's comfort to be found in carrying on traditions and recalling happy memories.

We'll also draw comfort from this poem a friend gave me.

My First Christmas in Heaven

*So have a Merry Christmas,
And wipe away that tear,
Remember I am spending
Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.*
(author unknown)

What more could you wish for someone you love?

Lisa M. Petsche is a mother of three and a freelance writer specializing in family life.



The Gospel according to four Christmas Carols ... continued from p. 13

Our world has shrunk as our experience of it has grown. We who live in the cold climates of North America and Europe realize, of course, that Christians in other parts of the world and in our own more temperate zones do not celebrate Christmas "in the bleak midwinter." Nor was Jesus born into frigid temperatures and snow in Bethlehem, whatever time of year his birthday actually occurred. Yet it seems appropriate that he should have taken on our flesh and broken into our world during dispiriting winter. There are many more winters in fallen human life than literal climatic ones. Poet Christina Rossetti understood that. And so the evidence of winter confronting us in her first stanza here is not simply a poetically romantic artifice, one which appeals to us because many of us like to picture, if not experience, a "white Christmas."

This winter world is desolate. An icy wind moans; the frozen ground may as well be iron, its water, stone. This is no day-or-two cold spell, mildly uncomfortable. The bitter chill has encouraged the snow; and more snow; and snow again. The cold, urged on by the bitter wind, has seeped into soil, walls, floors, beds, bodies. If there is any cheer in the snow's purifying whiteness that small comfort quickly gives way to a gray, harsh world. Bleak midwinter. Doesn't that remind you of our human condition apart from God? "Who will rescue us from this body – this world – of death?" (Romans 7:24).

Our God will. In fact, when he saw our destitution heaven could not contain him! He would not be held back. He saw our desperate need and met it. Whatever we might have chosen as the proper method, he came in human

form, helpless as we were. He even eschewed a proper bed. An animal shelter was enough for him, bed made of cattle feed in a trough! It was enough for the One adored by angels – cherubim, seraphim – enough for him who is worshiped in heaven day and night with the chant: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come" (Rev. 4:8).*

Enough, too, for the Bread of Life, was the sustenance from his quietly wondering, first-time mother's breast, her own worship a mother's kisses and deepest love. All that, enough for the One before whom all the world will one day bow.

It is easy to imagine, then, that the animals standing by worshiped him too (wholly, patiently unperturbed by his temporary usurping of their dinner table). There is biblical precedent for this delightful thought. "Every animal of the forest is mine," the LORD says, "and the cattle on a thousand hills" (and in that stable). "I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine" (Psalm 50:10-11). And so the animals, the trees, the mountains and seas praise their Creator in their creaturely ways, rejoicing in our salvation:

The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered with grain; they shout for joy, they also sing. Return to me, for I have redeemed you" (says the LORD), "Sing for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done this; shout aloud, O earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the LORD has redeemed Jacob, he displays his glory in Israel. (Psalm 65:12-13, NKJV, and Isaiah 44:23, NIV).

And what about us – we, created to uniquely reflect his glory but who so desperately need that Redemption? What can we offer to acknowledge this unsurpassable gift? We, discerning, made in his image, must, like the rest of his creation, become what he created us to be. So what is our suitable offering? What does he require?

If I were one of those exuberant shepherds, I would have offered the best of my lambs for the Lamb of God (I'd like to think). If I had been one of those ancient wise men I, like they, would have brought my costliest treasures for this newborn King (I tell myself). But I didn't attend his birth, I wasn't there to worship the toddler King; I don't possess their gifts. Though I didn't see his flesh and blood I see him through a less-dark glass. I must offer something else. All I have. My heart.

Related reading: Psalm 114; Psalm 148; Psalm 97; Isaiah 44:21-24, 49:8-13; Ephesians 3: 16-19; Romans 12: 1-2; Heb. 13:14-16.

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Reflections

The gift of reality

Happiness is having a large, loving, caring close-knit family in another city.
~ George Burns

I have a love-hate relationship with my family. Every Christmas, I can't wait to see them. In the weeks prior to gathering together, I spend inordinate amounts of time thinking about them all. *What would mom want for Christmas? Will dad flip over that sweater I bought him?* I buy special wrapping paper, make my gifts pretty, and sometimes even create homemade presents.

I imagine what the evening will be like: twinkling lights, festive music playing in the background, a deep heart-to-heart with my sister. I envision the warm, fuzzy feelings of sitting around the tree, singing a few carols. I imagine the moments of laughter, the wine, the "no you shouldn't have," and all the other heartfelt exchanges of gratitude and love shared.

But then we get together. And I realize I forgot my dad's gift at home. My prettily wrapped gifts have turn tie-dyed from me walking in the snow, and I notice only half of the Christmas lights are working. I try to talk to my sister, but she's cranky after driving in a snowstorm with five kids. And the wine my mom bought? Smells like bad BO. The "background music" is supplied by my baby nephew, and the only fuzzy feelings I experience are after I eat my aunt's "Stuffing Surprise."

My wish for an idyllic family gathering evaporates like a kid on a candy-cane. *Can't wait to see them?* I can't wait to leave them!

There's something about family that can turn a 40-year-old into an eight-year-old. There's something about family that causes an outbreak of foot-in-mouth disease and the miraculous growth of nine-inch toes. There's something about family that can suddenly morph you from a tranquil lamb into a vicious cat, or can turn you from charitable red into envious green.

And yet, for all their foibles, for all the emotional roller coasters you get to ride with your family, you still need them and want them.

In an odd way, unions are like families. People have a love-hate relationship with them. I often get asked where I work, and when I tell people that I work for a union, I see their faces clench a bit, their smiles turn plastic.

"A union . . . that's nice." I know they're not really saying what they think. I know that they hate unions, having swept them all into the same dustpan.

But I don't care. For all the flack unions get, some of them continue to grow. CLAC is the fastest-growing independent union in Canada. It grows because people need it in their workplace and want it there. It grows because, like a family, CLAC is a place where workers can bring their griefs and concerns, where they can get some support. It grows because real people work for CLAC and care about the union and its cause, people who have their members' best interests at heart.

As far as I can tell, unions will always be needed, but like families, sometimes it takes work to get along. Messy work. But it's in the messiness that we grow.

On our family blog, we have a saying: "Families are like fudge . . . mostly sweet with a few nuts." Every Christmas, I get the gift of reality given to me. And every year, I'm getting better at accepting this gift – putting away the perfectly wrapped ideas of what I *want* my family to be and accepting them for, well, the cracked nuts they sometimes are.

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One new word and two-root soup

When you're getting groceries, how do you decide what to buy? Well, if you have a tight budget, you check the price. If you have quality concerns, you find the certified organic label. If you have allergies, you read the ingredients. If you're health conscious, you count calories. And, if Richard Pirog has his way, you'll soon be reading eco-labels, too. Pirog was the first to point out that most of our food travels 1,500 miles (2,400 km) from the farm to the table – a journey with environmental costs in terms of fuel consumption and carbon dioxide emissions. He would like to see eco-labels indicate the energy impact of each product. Sound crazy? Not if you're a locavore.

The Oxford American Dictionary just declared "locavore" its 2007 Word of the Year. A locavore limits his or her food to what's been grown or raised locally (also known as the 100-Mile Diet). "Ignorance of our food sources," according to novelist Barbara Kingsolver, has caused "problems as diverse as overdependence on petroleum, and an epidemic of diet-related diseases" (*Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* 9). In other words, eating locally not only protects the environment, but it's healthier too, since less nutrients are lost to time and distance. Locavores are quick to point out that their food even tastes better.

This new trend has some pretty old roots. I don't have to go back any further than my father to hear stories about when one orange was a sufficiently special birthday present. Now we expect oranges to pass a battery of super-market tests: cheap, organic, non-allergenic and healthy. Can we handle adding anything else to the list? I get a bit weary at the thought of making "local" another requirement. Then that poor orange would be crossed off the grocery list altogether, unless I give my daughter one for Christmas, as an exotic, long-distance treat.

The locavore's argument is an interesting one, but it's not foolproof. Critics point out that a farm can be "local" (in the sense that it's near your home) without practicing the sustainable agriculture that the movement encourages. There isn't a standard definition for "local" yet, leaving it open to the same loopholes that big businesses have exploited in the "organic" market. Furthermore, don't we pride ourselves on the diversity that a global diet provides? If I ate local food only, I'd have to give up some serious staples: coffee, tea, and chocolate – just to name a few. Several food purists in North America have written about the troubles they've had getting a hold of basic things, such as locally-ground flour.

Clearly, eating in an eco-friendly way has its challenges. But even if I'm not prepared to go locavore, it's good to start being aware of where food comes from and when it's in season. If each of us ate one meal a week (any meal) composed of local products, "we would reduce our country's oil consumption by over 1.1 million barrels of oil every week" (*Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* 5). Trying to eat locally a little more often might also preserve small family farms, as Don Ruzicka wrote about in November 19's *Courier*. It would also reduce the power of agri-business corporations. *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* by Ronald J. Sider (1977) explains how our food systems contribute to world hunger, offering further incentive for local eating.

Almost thirty years ago, Mennonite Doris Janzen Longacre wrote that "there is not . . . a single answer to the world's food problem. It may not be within our capacity to effect an answer. But it is within our capacity to search for a faithful response" (*The More-with-Less Cookbook* 7). Maybe thinking of the "eco-label" on our purchases should become part of that faithful response.

All of our daily activities – not just eating – have local repercussions. Sometimes routine can create a false sense of distance from our neighbours. We've lived in Barrie over a year, for example, and I'm (evangelically) embarrassed to admit that we still don't know the first names of one set of neighbours. I used to reason with myself that this was understandable, since we got off to a bad start with them. . . .

When we went house-hunting last summer, our notes for the place we eventually bought included only one negative comment: "Next door: v. loud." In our excitement, it was easy to mentally cross that warning off the list. About two weeks after we moved in, however, there was a v. loud party next door. We closed our windows to block out the music and, later, the sounds of fighting. It was two in the morning by the time a police car pulled into our shared driveway, and then our neighbour's son spent his nineteenth birthday in jail. We were first-time home owners, wondering if we'd made a foolish purchase in a v. rough neighbourhood.

They turned out to be semi-friendly, ordinary people, yet I find myself struggling for things to discuss – besides the weather – when I meet them outside while raking leaves or bringing in the garbage cans. It took me a while to get up the courage to ask them over for supper. They said they were busy. I asked again the next week, but then they were sick. Finally, I just carried over a pot of warm, wintry soup, made with vegetables and cheese from the farmer's market. This neighbour returned my pot last night, and then – finally – agreed to come over for supper next Wednesday.

"The next time you put on a dinner, invite some people who never get invited out. . . [and] you'll be – and experience – a blessing" (Luke 14:13 *The Message*).

Cream of carrot-cheddar soup

2 Tbsp. margarine
½ cup onion (chopped)
Sauté together in a large pot.

8-10 carrots (chopped)
3-5 potatoes (chopped)
6 cups chicken broth
½ tsp. dried thyme
1 bay leaf
¼ tsp. Tabasco sauce
½ tsp. Worcestershire sauce
½ tsp. sugar
salt and pepper to taste.

Add and simmer until vegetables are tender.

Remove from heat. Discard bay leaf. Puree in a blender or food processor (briefly, if you prefer chunky soup).

1 ½ cups milk
1 ½ cups cheddar cheese (grated)

Put the soup back in its pot and add dairy products. Heat until the cheese is melted.

Serve hot and sprinkled with parsley.

The *More-with-Less Cookbook* calls this soup "wonderful for Christmas Eve-type supper."

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Eating
my
words

Angela Bick

Pastoral excellence

Emotional intelligence in ministry — The crux of the matter

Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen

Daniel Goleman's bestselling book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It can Matter More than IQ* billed itself as "the groundbreaking book that redefined what it means to be smart." On his blog (www.DanielGoleman.info/blog), Goleman admits that he was surprised when the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) spread like wildfire after the release of his book in 1995. "Perhaps the biggest surprise for me has been the impact of EI in the world of business, particularly in the areas of leadership and employee development," Goleman writes. Although Goleman deserves credit for bringing the concept of EI into the public realm — *The Harvard Business Review* hailed emotional intelligence as "a ground-breaking, paradigm-shattering idea" — the term emotional intelligence was actually coined in 1990 in an academic paper written by Peter Salovey of Yale University and John D. Mayer of the University of New Hampshire. Salovey and Mayer defined EI as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions."

Emotional intelligence hasn't negated the importance of IQ or made it irrelevant, experts say, but it has shown that intelligence is made up of more than just cognitive smarts. In a paper entitled "Emotional Intelligence: What It Is and Why It Matters," Cary

Cherniss of Rutgers University says it would be absurd to suggest that cognitive ability is irrelevant. "One needs a relatively high level of such ability merely to get admitted to a graduate science program at a school like Berkeley," writes Cherniss. "Once you are admitted, however, what matters in terms of how you do compared to your peers has less to do with IQ differences and more to do with social and emotional factors. To put it another way, if you are a scientist, you probably needed an IQ of 120 or so simply to get a doctorate and a job. But then it is more important to be able to persist in the face of difficulty and to get along well with colleagues and subordinates than it is to have an extra 10 or 15 points of IQ. The same is true in many other occupations."

In the years since the publication of Goleman's book, academics have published volumes of research demonstrating a clear link between emotional competencies and personal and professional success. Many workplace studies have shown that employees who demonstrate emotional intelligence are more productive and contribute more positively to a company's bottom line. "Today companies worldwide routinely look through the lens of Emotional Intelligence in hiring, promoting, and developing their employees," writes Goleman in a recent web blog. "For instance, Johnson and Johnson found that in divisions around the world, those identified at mid-career as having high leadership potential were far stronger in EI competencies than were their less-promising peers." (DanielGoleman.info)

In another study cited by the Institute for Health and Human Potential (www.ihhp.com), supervisors in a plant were trained in emotional competencies such as how to listen better and help employees resolve problems, how to empower and inspire others, and how to become more effective personal leaders. Results of the study showed that the training had immediate benefits for the plant, resulting in a 50 percent reduction in lost-time accidents, far fewer formal grievances and increases in net profits.

With research demonstrating the intrinsic value of EI to the business world, it is not surprising that some in the church are now looking to training in emotional competencies to minister more effectively. One only needs to "Google" the words "Emotional Intelligence and the Church" to discover that there is small but growing list of training resources available to church leaders in this area. One such workshop by the Center for Congregational Health in North Carolina is entitled "Improving Congregational Leadership Through Emotional Intelligence."

Rev. Phil Reinders — pastor of a large, established congregation in Calgary, Alberta — agrees that it is time for church leaders to consider EI in equipping them-

selves for ministry. "It is vital to consider emotional intelligence, because pastoral ministry involves human dynamics," he says. "We've too easily divorced spirituality from emotional health," says Reinders. "John Calvin said that all wisdom is found in knowledge of God and knowledge of ourselves. So often, we focus on the first but neglect the second. But true wisdom must pair theological depth alongside of deep self-awareness."

Ron Klok, a parish pastor in Edmonton, Alberta, also agrees that EI plays a significant role in a life of ministry. "If emotional intelligence is about cultivating and learning to feel the full range of human emotion, then the importance of EQ in pastoral ministry is a no-brainer," Klok says. Both pastors agree that training in emotional competencies was mostly lacking in their formal education but they've sought out — and discovered — how to hone those skills in other settings. "Generally speaking, my training failed me in that its focus was almost exclusively on training in theology," says Klok. He credits reading and praying, seeing a therapist, having a spiritual director, attending professional development seminars and good literature for helping him to focus on the sources of his deeper emotions and unhealthy emotional responses.

Reinders, too, wishes his education had taught him more about dealing with the inner self. "There is not sufficient attention paid to training pastors to be self-aware," Reinders says. He adds that pastors interested in developing these skills don't need to look too far to find the right training ground. "The best place to train for emotional competencies is in the real life of my immediate family relationships," Reinders says.

For instance, Reinders says that family relationships can teach us a lot about how to handle conflict and work through emotional issues. It all comes down to knowing yourself, says Reinders. "When I have a strong awareness of who I am, I'm freed up to not get freaked out about conflict. I don't need the other person's approval so I can speak the truth in love. I can be present without taking on someone else's anxiety."

Many pastors intuitively know that empathy is key when ministering to their parishioners in difficult situations. Now, research is affirming the value of empathy in other human interactions as well. Experts point out that empathy, or the ability to identify with others' emotions, is a crucial component of EI. "[Robert] Rosenthal and his colleagues at Harvard discovered over two decades ago that people who were best at identifying others' emotions were more successful in their work as well as in their social lives," writes Cherniss.

Klok agrees that empathy is a key emotional competency, and it is essential in pastoral ministry. "If you want to be in the business of ministry, there is nothing more critical than empathy," says Klok. "Those who have cultivated a wide range of feelings are much better equipped to help others," he says.



While both Klok and Reinders believe they have become better pastors by working on issues of emotional competencies and personal emotional health, they caution churches against looking to EI for reasons of productivity. Churches should look to EI with different motivations than those in secular settings, they say. "The idea that we want people to be emotionally healthy so that they can be more productive feels crassly secular," says Klok. "In ministry and in the body of Christ, we want people to be healthy because we are interested in building healthy communities."

If churches with emotionally healthy leaders are more efficient, that's just a happy by-product, Reinders says. The real value of EI is that it allows us to more accurately portray the love of Jesus. "I'm loved, I'm accepted, I'm approved by God," says Reinders. "That identity is spiritually and emotionally the crux."

Resources

Center for Congregational Health — See the section "Services" and "Leadership Development for Clergy" on the website at <http://www.healthychurch.org>

The Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations (www.eiconsortium.org) — This website provides many resources on EI in the context of organizational leadership.

www.DanielGoleman.info/blog — Daniel Goleman's website includes a web blog highlighting many research findings about Emotional Intelligence.

"Emotional Intelligence: What it is and Why it Matters" by Cary Cherniss, Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, Rutgers University. (View an online version of this paper at www.businessballs.com/emotionalintelligenceexplanation.pdf)

Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ by Daniel Goleman, copyright 1995 Daniel Goleman (Bantam Books)

Emotional Intelligence Information: A Site Dedicated to Communicating Scientific Information about Emotional Intelligence, Including Relevant Aspects of Emotions, Cognition, and Personality. (http://www.unh.edu/emotional_intelligence/)

Glory glory glory

And glory tore the darkened sky
to ribbons of blaze and bugle brilliance
and fiery it flared flashing from
near to far transfixing all below

And pouring perilous light down
through the fractured firmament
from heaven's holy fullness:
"Glory to God in the highest!"

Flooding aghast and gaping
eyes mouths ears hearts turned
heavenward like pale lilies
receiving glory glory glory

In jangling hearts bleating jubilantly
gaping like gills for water
waving like elephant ears for wind
angling like eagle wings for lift

Crying for more more more
of show and shine and shout
in blood and bone, in mind and muscle
to be transfused, transported

Into hallelujah hail and hallow
to join the raucous roar of angels
rousing fainting fellows to adore,
kindling gloryfire in folk forevermore.

Harry der Nederlanden

Reflections



Welcome to
my perch
Bert Witvoet

Black Pete at the manger?

This is the Christmas issue for *CC* and I'm going to write about Black Pete. Why? you ask. You have asked well.

Black Pete belongs to the Dutch Sinterklaas tradition. And Sinterklaas has nothing to do with the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. That's why the Dutch separate Sinterklaas and gift giving from Christmas. But you, reader, have probably surrendered to the North American way of combining gift-giving and Christmas. So even though you have asked a very good question, your own practices show how confused you are yourself and that you have no right to question me on combining Christmas and Black Pete.

Possible scenario

Now I could string you a line and say that Black Pete was a servant of one of the magi who came to Bethlehem to worship the King of the Jews. Judging by their lavish gifts, these astrologers were independently wealthy and would certainly be surrounded by an entourage of servants. These servants had to protect their masters and serve them. Some of these servants had swords on them.

But there was one fellow of dark complexion who had chosen as lethal weapon a bunch of twigs tied together with a string made of twisted donkey hair. And he carried a gunny sack with goodies on his back. The bunch of twigs was for punishing naughty kids they would come across on their way to Jerusalem, and the gunny sack filled mostly with *pepermuts* and ginger bread figures, was for rewarding kids that were helpful along the way and would fetch water for the camels. The name of this fellow? You guessed it: Black Pete, or "zwarte Piet" as Dutch traders who had sold him on the market in Ur of the Chaldeans had called him. The man who bought Zwarte Piet from the Dutch traders was none other than one of the Magi whom we call Balthazar, but who was known to his friends as Sinterklaas.

People in Jerusalem couldn't stop laughing when they spotted this fellow with a white beard, a flowing red cape and a strange looking hat, known as a miter, riding a white Arabian stallion through the Sheep Gate right up to the palace of Herod Antipas. Fortunately Zwarte Piet was there to take care of the poop and scoop thing, using his bag with goodies as a temporary deposit. You can imagine that Herod would have been mightily upset had this fellow Sinterklaas left his horse's calling card on the shiny pavement in front of the palace. I won't bore you with details about how Moshe son of Ephraim threw a stone at the horse and how it bucked but was unable to dislodge the saint. Had the incident taken place a few centuries later it would have earned Sinterklaas points at the Calgary Stampede. If that anachronism bothers you, think of the fact that a Catholic saint was present in Jerusalem at the time of the birth of Jesus.

December connection

As I said earlier, I could string you a line about this strange combination of a column about Black Pete and the Christmas issue of *CC*, but I won't. I'm simply a too honest and decent fellow to do that sort of thing. No, the reason I am writing about Black Pete for the Christmas issue is that I was once a Zwarte Piet in Holland, before we immigrated to Canada. The date was December 5, 1945. Get the connection now? December – the month in which we celebrate Christmas – and me, the person who was a Black Pete, exactly 62 years ago on December 5, the day that I am writing this column. The figure 62



Kindergarten class 1939

is only 38 years shy of 100, which makes for a nice round anniversary number. And the practice of gift-giving is so all mixed up with "Silent Night, Holy Night" in your mind anyway, dear commercialized reader, that this particular topic should not bother anyone of you.

Yes, on December 5, 1945, I, Bertus Witvoet, an 11-year-old snotnose from Joure, Friesland, was enlisted into the service of Sinterklaas by my Dad. You see, my Dad was a hairdresser, and every year he would rent a number of Sinterklaas and Black Pete costumes from a costume rental "firma" in Leeuwarden (I'm not quite sure how to translate that difficult word "firma" into English, but it comes close to the word "firm."). Add those costumes to the outfit that my mother had made years ago, and presto, he was ready to churn out all kinds of Sinterklaases and Black Petes in his salon on any given December 5. We as kids would see certain towns people we knew (all men, of course) come into the "ladies" salon on that eventful day and emerge an hour later as Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet.

Bereft of faith

Is it any wonder, dear reader, that as kids we never believed in Sinterklaas. "Oh ye, of little faith," you might say. But how would you sustain that kind of faith if every time you went to bed you would be staring at our own home-made Sinterklaas staff that was leaning against the wall in a corner, next to the flagpole. And from time to time we would crawl up the ladder to the attic and open the box where the costumes were kept, never mind the fact that once a year my Dad had male customers come into his ladies parlour? How could we possibly take serious all this stuff about a saint who was hundreds of years old and who rode his white horse from Spain with his trusty black servant trotting alongside, all the way to our cosmopolitan town of Joure, inhabitants 5,000, four times that many around the time of the Joustier fair? Or had his party boarded a ship at Gibraltar? The details were always a bit cloudy.

No, when the pseudo saint and his soot-covered slave appeared on the deck of a local merchant's freight ship, I would stand on the quay, hands in my pocket, snickering at all these gullible kids around me. I have a suspicion that there were even a few adults in the crowd who were shaking in their boots or wooden shoes at the thought that their bad deeds had been recorded in Sinterklaas's diary. How they were fooled into thinking that the old grey mare that belonged to Herman Holtrop had made the thousand-mile journey on the dilapidated fifty-foot long ocean liner that pulled into the harbour goes beyond me. More used to pulling a load of manure, the old hack had absolutely no interest in prancing up and down the deck, as one of the Sinterklaas songs requires.

I still have a 1939 black and white picture of all the Kindergarten kids of Joure with Sinterklaas and Black Pete in their midst. I was five years old and standing in the back row. My friend Clarence Alkema from Whitby, who is one day younger than me, is also in the picture. I'm quite sure that Clarence took Black Pete at face value – no doubt he thought of him as Sinterklaas's servant from Spain. But I knew better. And I don't say that because I was and am one day older than Clarence! I knew it was Uiltje Dijkstra, who lived four houses away from ours. He didn't have an ounce of Moorish blood in him. His dad sold locally grown vegetables and fruit. There was nothing exotic about the Dijkstras. You could tell that they had no connection with Spain or Africa because during the war years they could not get a hold of a single orange or banana. No, when it came to Sinterklaas and Black Pete, I wasn't even an agnostic. I was a downright pagan.

Mission unexpected

But I digress. On that fateful December 5, 1945, I was dragooned into service by Dad. The situation was as follows. A rich family in our town was having a Sinterklaas evening at their home for their kids. The father was part owner of a printing business, and so he had asked one his employees

See Black Pete on p. 18

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Christmas greetings

The residents of **Shalom Manor and Gardens**,
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The Word became flesh and dwelt among us... John 1:14

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Wishing you all the joys His love brings

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Black Pete...cont. from 17

to function as Sinterklaas. For that purpose, he arranged with my dad to rent a costume (none of that home-made Sinterklaas stuff with a Persian table cloth as cape, pulled-apart cotton balls as beard and wig, and a cardboard miter on his head. No he got a real Sinterklaas outfit with beard and wig made from real hair, and fancy costume that would look great on any Catholic bishop. But he must have been a little stingy because he had not ordered a Black Pete for the occasion. So what does my dad do? He throws me into the bargain. "Here, take my son. A Sinterklaas without a Black Pete is like an Ephrata shepherd without sheep." Well, he didn't put it quite that way, but he could have, had he known about the way we mess up Christmas and gift-giving.

So my face, neck and wrists were quickly covered with black make-up and I was stuck into a smart-looking Pete outfit. I never knew who Sinterklaas was, but together we stepped into a taxi and were driven to the house of the rich but stingy factory owner. I had a bag with me, and someone at the door stuffed a few presents in it that I had to give to a couple of spoiled brats. When it was time to leave the room where the family had gathered, the grandmother stuffed a *rijksdaalder* (a two and half guilder coin) into my white-glove-covered hand. I guess she was a little freer with money than that cheap son of hers, raising the question in my eleven-year-old mind: "How shall the young direct their way?" And then we were driven home again, and my life as Zwarte Piet came to a sudden and anti-climactic end.

Conclusion

That was December 5, 1945. Less than two months later my Dad suddenly passed away. The Sinterklaas staff stood forlorn in the corner of our attic space for several years, and the costumes lingered in the attic. We took the costumes along to Canada in 1950, where they were used for a few Sinterklaas events. And thus Sinterklaas and Black Pete became landed immigrants in 1950.

So what does all this have to do with Christmas? you ask. Nothing, zilch, nada, niks. And that's my point about gift-giving at Christmas, you see. These things just don't belong together, no matter how cleverly you connect the gift of Jesus in a manger with the gift of an I-pod underneath the Christmas tree.

Blessed Christmas, all of you!

Bert Witvoet is the former editor of CC, now retired, who stays active by editing

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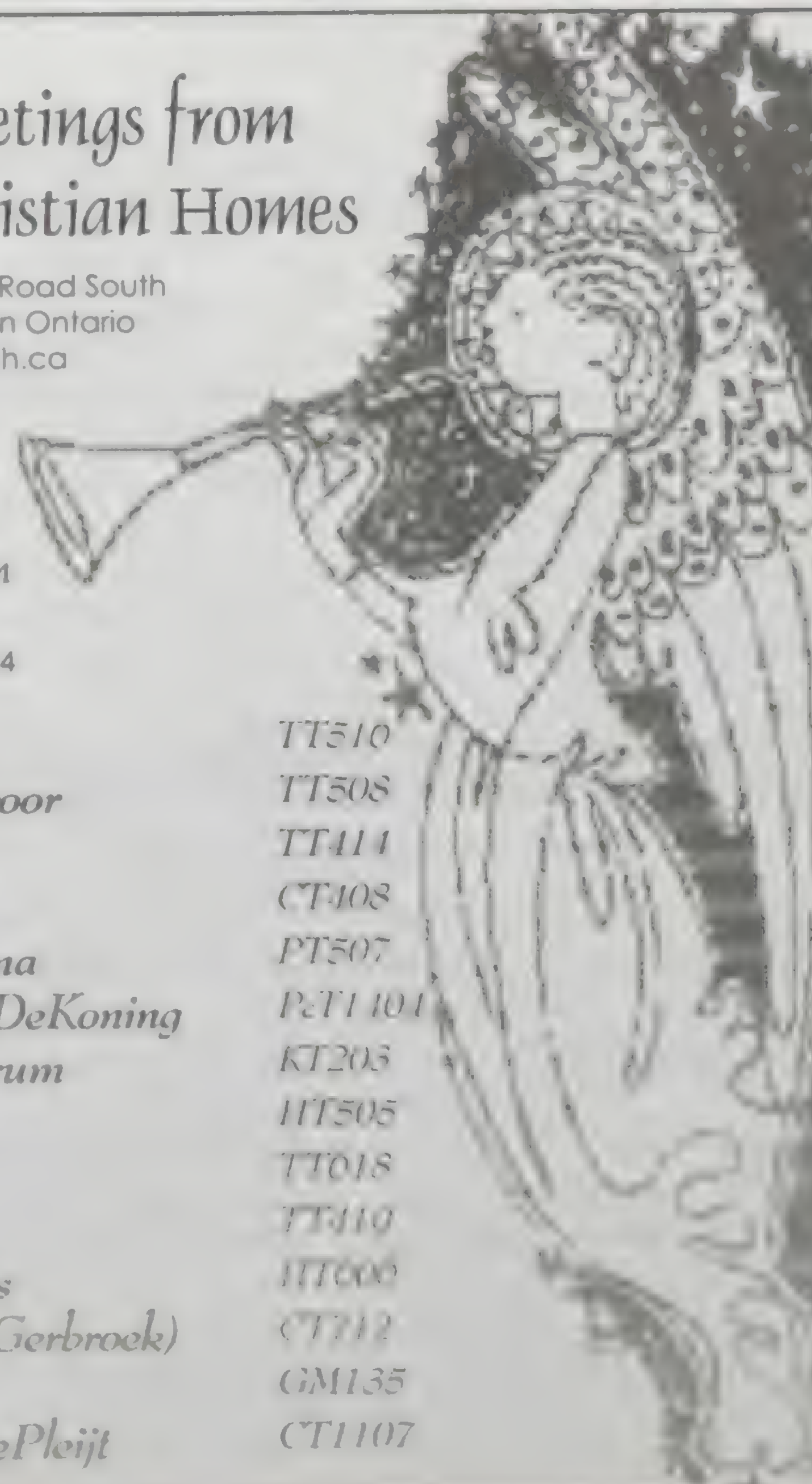
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Luke 2:14

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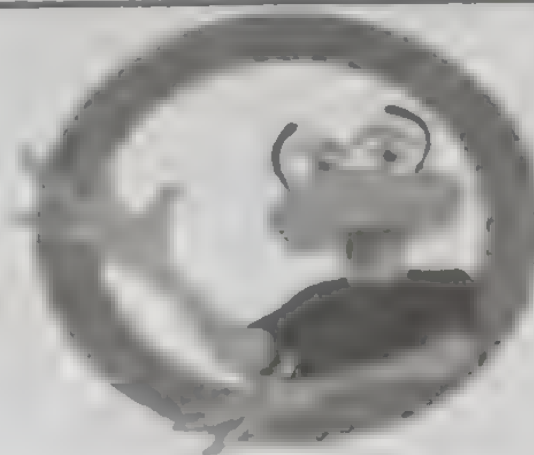
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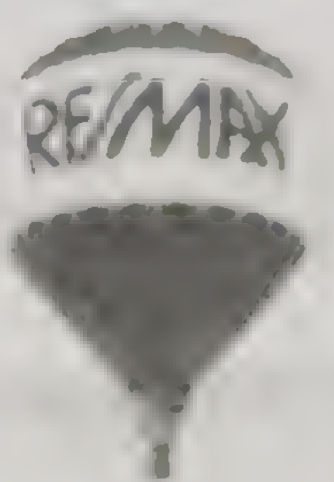
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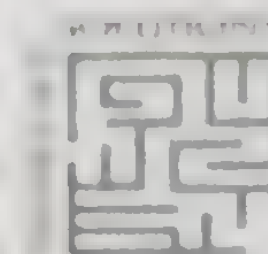
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Birthdays	Anniversaries	Obituaries
<p>Romans 11:36 90th</p> <p>Tine Tensen was born on Jan. 5, 1918 in Andijk, Noord Holland.</p> <p>Her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren thank the Lord for her love, sweetness, prayers, and generosity.</p> <p>Home address: Apt 10-110 Caverly Road Aylmer ON N5H 2P4 or phone 519-773-8552</p> <p><i>Unto the hills I lift my eyes, from where comes all my aid. Book of Praise, Psalm 121:1</i></p> <p>We would like to congratulate our father, grandfather, great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather</p> <p>Mense Meijert de Groot (Menno) with his 100th Birthday on December 31, 2007</p> <p>There will be an Open House on that day from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Faith Manor #2, Holland Christian Homes 7800 McLaughlin Road, Brampton</p> <p>Correspondence: Menno de Groot, 2303 Fassel Ave Burlington ON L7R 3P4</p>	<p>1952 December 21 2007</p> <p>Sincere congratulations are in order as we acknowledge God's faithfulness in the 55th Wedding Anniversary of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. May they continue to experience God's nearness, good health, and happiness in the years to come.</p> <p>ADAM VAN DER VELDE and ANNEKE STIENSTRA-VAN DER VELDE</p> <p>Hessel Vandervelde & Audrey Wiggers-Vandervelde, Renfrew, Ont. Amanda Vandervelde & David Karaikos, Waterloo, Ont. Shawn Vandervelde & Lisa Marshall-Vandervelde, Kelowna, B.C. Tyker Vandervelde, Kelowna, B.C. Arnold Vandervelde & Jill Peak-Vandervelde, Kingston, Ont. Justin Vandervelde, Edmonton, Alta. Derek Vandervelde, Kingston, Ont. Christie Vandervelde, Kingston, Ont. Theresa Vandervelde-van Manen & John van Manen, Oshawa, Ont. Timothy van Manen & Amy Meadows, London, Ont. Kailey Meadows, Emma van Manen Kimberly van Manen & Adam de Vries, Whitby, Ont. James van Manen, Oshawa, Ont.</p> <p>Address: 1715 Beachburg Road, Beachburg ON K0J 1C0</p>	<p>Hogebeintem, Holland April 10, 1922</p> <p>The Lord took home our wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother</p> <p>SHIRLEY (Sjoukje) BERGSMa (nee Hoekstra)</p> <p>Beloved wife of Jelle Bergsma for almost 64 years</p> <p>Loving mother of: Wilma (Robert) VanderKooi Abbotsford, B.C. Ted (Patti) Bergsma Calgary, Alta. George (Sheila) Bergsma Burks Falls, Ont. Joan (Ken) Horlings Bradford, Ont. Frank (Sheila) Bergsma Errington, B.C. Millie (Doug) Dennis Nanticoke, Ont. Elaine (Harry) Hoving Bradford, Ont. Allan (Dale) Bergsma Emsdale, Ont.</p> <p>Loving grandmother of 24 grandchildren and 27 great-grandchildren. Twin sister of Frieda (Harmen) Bakker of Townsend and predeceased by Frans, Geertje, Herman, and Rienke.</p> <p><i>Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Hebrews 13:8</i></p> <p>Correspondence: 23-76 Town Centre Dr. Townsend ON N0A 1S0</p> <p>Townsend, Ontario November 19, 2007</p> <p>After a courageous battle with cancer the Lord took home to his Mansion of Glory and endless delight our dear twin sister, sister-in-law and aunt</p> <p>SHIRLEY BERGSMa nee Hoekstra in her 86th year</p> <p>Sadly missed by her family</p> <p>Harmen & Frieda Bakker nee Hoekstra 310 - 72 Towncentre Dr Townsend ON N0A 1S0</p>
<p>Anniversaries</p> <p>1947 December 18 2007</p> <p>We thank God for our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents</p> <p>JACK and JOHANNA THALEN on their 60th Wedding Anniversary.</p> <p>For 60 years they have reflected God's love in their marriage. Together, they are an example to all of us of Christian faithfulness</p> <p>Mom and Dad, we thank you for the love and joy you have shown all of us in so many different ways</p> <p>Harry & Jenny Thalen (Guelph, ON) Nellie & Frank Bergman (Woodstock, ON) Eric & Elizabeth Thalen (Coquitlam, BC) Jack & Jennifer Thalen (Abbotsford, BC) Hilda & John VanGysse (Elmira, ON) Joanne & Bruce Adema (Burlington, ON) and many grandchildren & great-grandchildren</p> <p>To celebrate this occasion, friends and family are invited to an Open House from 2-4 p.m. on Saturday, December 15 at the home of Harry & Jenny Thalen (62 Hazelwood Drive, Guelph ON).</p> <p>Home address: 82 Cedar St, Guelph ON N1G 1C5</p>	 <p>1942 December 23 2007</p> <p><i>I will not let you go unless you bless me. Genesis 32:26b</i></p> <p>WOBBE and PIETJE BYLSMA (nee Venema)</p> <p>We, their children, thank and praise God for his faithfulness to our parents for 65 years of marriage.</p> <p>Theresa and Jim Brand Auke and Chris Bylsma Wibbina and Gerald Toonk John and Ruby Bylsma Anne and Terry Kaastra Cory and John Kuipers Pat and Dave Brodie</p> <p>and all their grandchildren and great grandchildren.</p> <p>Mom and Dad's home address is 83632 Allboro Line RR1 Blyth ON N0M 1H0</p>	<p>MARTIN MOSTERT</p> <p>went home to be with his Lord and Savior, in his 78th year on Sunday, Nov. 18th, 2007</p> <p>Beloved husband of Jessie Mostert nee Zandstra</p> <p>Survived by his children and grandchildren: Carolyn (Tony) - Cave, Lyndall, Dara, Bethany Richard (Renee) - Krystina, Philip, Jonathan, Elda Raymond (Halette) - Matthias, Janessa, Deborah Loretta Mostert</p> <p>Dear brother to: Maria Vogel (the late Peter). Eliza & Gay Mostert. Minnie Zegers (the late Frank) Cor & Carol Mostert, Pat Mostert (the late Dick) and the late Arend Mostert</p> <p>A memorial service was held Thursday, Nov. 22, 2007 at 1 p.m. at Maranatha CRC, Bowmanville, Ontario</p> <p>Correspondence: Jessie Mostert 2 Munday Court Bowmanville ON L1C 4R7</p> <p>The Lord, in his wisdom, unexpectedly took home his child</p> <p>KASE VANDEN HEUVEL in peace on December 8, 2007 in Goderich at the age of 81.</p> <p>Beloved husband and dear friend of Annie. Caring brother of Truus Swart. Lovingly remembered and sadly missed by his 6 children; Christina & Clint, Laurence & Helen, Marian & Henry, Audrey & Christopher, Gilbert & Joannie, and Casey & Megan. Cherished Opa to 11 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren.</p> <p>Predeceased by his brother Gysbert Vanden Heuvel.</p> <p>To know Kase was to know a proud immigrant from Holland who embraced the opportunities in Canada. Kase had vision and curiosity which, together with his wife Annie, led to world travels, successful business ventures and involvement in community projects. Kase valued lifelong learning, he modeled stewardship and mentorship, and above all he treasured times with family. Many lives were touched by him. Indeed, his passing is the end of an era.</p> <p>The funeral service was held at the Clinton Christian Reformed Church. Reverend Ron Luchies officiated. Interment was held at the Maitland Cemetery, Goderich.</p> <p>Correspondence: Kase Vanden Heuvel, RR 2, Goderich ON N7A 3X8</p>
 <p>BERT and SHIRLEY BRANDERHORST celebrated 50 years of Marriage</p> <p>Their address: 17 Abbey Lane Exeter ON N0M 1S1</p> <p><i>Our apologies - we forgot to include the address last time</i></p>	<p>Retirement</p> <p>The Board of Directors of Timothy Christian School Barrie, Ontario</p> <p>invites parents, past and present teachers, graduates, colleagues, friends and support community to celebrate with us the retirement of our principal Mr. Leo Smit</p> <p>We will be hosting a retirement celebration at Timothy Christian School, 750 Essa Road, Barrie, Ontario on Saturday, January 12, 2008 from 1:30 - 4:00 p.m. and invite you to join us in this expression of thanks and appreciation.</p> <p>For more information or opportunity to send congratulations please contact Mrs. Kristin Klein at (705) 792-0650 or email krissy1@canada.com</p>	<p>Visscher's Travel & Cruise Ltd.</p> <p>Come and join us for 14 days of Christian fellowship, spectacular fjords and majestic old world capitals.</p> <p>Visscher's Christian Guided Tours presents the Baltic Capitals & Norwegian Fjords cruise May 24- June 07/08.</p> <p>Daytime land excursions. Evening devotions. Sunday worship services led by Hank Den Hollander. An experience to remember.</p> <p>Contact your hosts: Ralph and Grace Visscher Toll Free: 1-800-811-2388. Website: www.visschertravelcruise.com</p>

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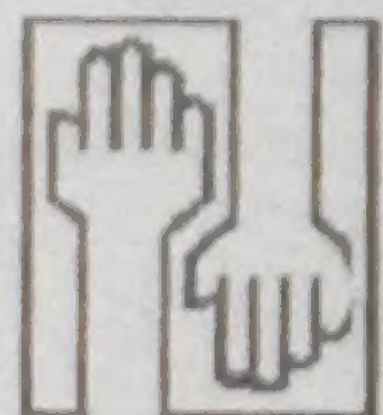
The ideal candidate will have a graduate degree, be able to relate to and engage the university community, both students and staff, from a Reformed theological perspective in the context of a multi-faith environment.

More details can be found at:

http://www.wlu.ca/docsnpubs_detail.php?grp_id=226&doc_id=27499

Or you can contact the Search Committee Chair,

Rudy Eikelboom at reikelboom@wlu.ca



PARENT PROFESSIONALS

Mutual Support Systems of the Niagara Region, a non-profit agency providing residential care and treatment for children invites applications for the position of House Parents. An ideal career choice for a married couple to work together in meaningful ministry, these are full-time, salaried, live-in positions for both partners. Our House Parents are the heart and soul of the Mutual Support program. See our web site for more program information.

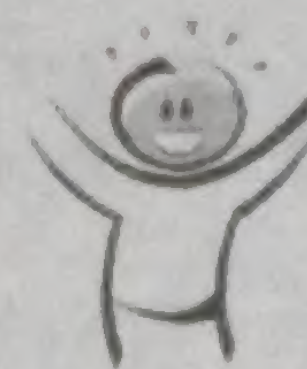
Please contact:

Randy Klassen

Associate Director-Human Resources
792 Canboro Rd. Fenwick ON L0S 1C0

Tel: 905 892 4332

rklassen@mutualsupport.net www.mutualsupport.net



**WorldwideTM
Christian Schools**

invites applications for: Western Development Director

Worldwide Christian Schools (WWCS) is a Christian organization providing Christian education for children in developing countries. Due to the growth with which God has blessed us across the country, we require a Western Development Director to be responsible for furthering the vision and mission of WWCS, with primary attention given to Donor Development, Public Relations and HANDS/HEART Programs.

Preference will be given to candidates residing in the Fraser Valley in British Columbia and who have development experience.

Send cover letter and resume to:

Worldwide Christian Schools

70 Lancing Drive, Hamilton, ON L8W 3A1

866-360-4274 canada@wwcs.org

Full job description available upon request.



TRINITY
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

PRINCIPAL OPENING

www.tcsonline.ca

Trinity Christian School's vision is that all children from Christian families know, love and serve our Saviour Jesus Christ. Our mission is to enable our children to develop their gifts for service in God's world through a Christ-centered, quality education.

Trinity Christian School in Burlington, Ontario invites applications for the full-time position of principal to commence August 1, 2008.

Trinity Christian School is a junior kindergarten to grade eight, multi-denominational school, with over 300 students in a brand new facility

We offer the following:

- ▶ Experienced and dedicated staff
- ▶ A visionary Board of Directors
- ▶ A supportive parent community
- ▶ A vibrant and diverse school community

We seek the following:

- ▶ A believer, with a sincere faith in Jesus Christ
- ▶ A principled leader who will coach, mentor and encourage staff
- ▶ An organizer who can delegate effectively
- ▶ An individual with excellent communication, critical thinking and interpersonal skills with both children and adults
- ▶ An experienced and enthusiastic leader who will cultivate Trinity Christian School's vision and mission in our expanding community

A detailed job description is available upon request.

Interested candidates should send a cover letter, resume, statement of faith and their philosophy of Christian education by January 10, 2008 to:

Search Committee

c/o M. Robins

PO Box 5070 Stn LCD 1, Burlington ON L7R 3Y8

or email robinsm@crcna.ca

All inquiries and applications will be treated confidentially.

See page 22 for Dordt Faculty positions.

For all job opportunities recently run in the Christian Courier,
visit our website at: www.christiancourier.ca

Advertising



Dordt College Faculty Positions

Dordt College is seeking applications in the following areas:

August, 2008

Art

Teach introductory and upper division fine art media courses, particularly in the areas of drawing, painting, and sculpture as well as teaching art history.

Business Administration

Teach courses in management and/or marketing. Applicants should have professional experience and degree in the field; preference given for those with ability to assist with departmental leadership and development.

Communication

Teach introductory and advanced courses; preference given to applicants able to teach Public Relations and Organizational Communication.

Criminal Justice

Teach in an interdisciplinary criminal justice program. Applicants should have professional experience and degree in the field. Background in sociology, political science or public administration desirable.

Economics

Teach introductory and advanced economics courses within a Business Administration program.

Education

Teach courses in special education, ESL, and teaching methods, and supervise student teachers.

English (Half-time)

Teach introductory writing and literature courses. Interest and experience in journalism, film history and theory, or screenwriting would be helpful.

History

Teach the first half of Western Culture and the World (core), upper-level American and/or European History courses, with ability to teach a non-Western survey course.

Physics/Astronomy

Teach introductory and advanced courses.

Psychology (Possible)

Teach introductory and advanced research-focused courses (e.g., Learning, Biopsychology, I/O, Statistics).

Soccer Coach/Sports Information Director

Combination Coach (men's and women's soccer) and sports information director or teaching in an academic discipline.

To learn more about a position and receive application materials, qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and curriculum vita/resume to:

Dr. Rockne McCarthy
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dordt College
498 4th Ave. NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697

Facsimile: 712 722-1198
E-mail: vpaa@dordt.edu
Web site: www.dordt.edu/offices/academic_affairs

Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution that strongly encourages the applications of women, minorities, and disabled persons.

Elim Investment Opportunities



Bonds

Shorter term investments are also available upon inquiry.

This is not to be construed as an offer to solicit investments and no investment can be made until the investor has received an information statement issued by Elim Housing Society.

Established by the Elim Housing Society in 1995, Elim Village is located on 20 acres in the heart of Surrey's Fleetwood area. Based and operated on Christian principles, Elim's vision is to provide various levels of quality care for seniors.

Today, over 300 people call Elim home and are able to enjoy the benefits of living within a caring Christian retirement community. As part of Elim's ongoing successful financial strategy, we offer a variety of investment opportunities. Our rates are determined by the Royal Bank of Canada's prime rate.

We currently offer
Royal Bank of Canada's
prime plus 1%
(not to exceed 7%)

On November
28th, 2007
Elim Investments
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7%

For more information regarding investment with Elim Village, contact Terry-Lynn Dryfhout at tld@elimvillage.com or call 778.996.7755. Visit our website at www.ElimVillage.com



A Christian Retirement Community



A Christmas candle is a lovely thing;
It makes no noise at all,
But softly gives itself away;
While quite unselfish,
it grows small.

— Eva K. Logue



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Classifieds

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

Christian Courier is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Tuesday, 13 days prior to publication date.

RATE: (GST added to rates listed)

All personal and family announcements: \$6.00 per square inch. Email: rose@christiancourier.ca
Display advertising re. businesses and organizations: \$8.00 per square inch. Email: ads@christiancourier.ca

PHOTOS: There is a processing fee of \$25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged per square inch but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. Please note that we cannot use a faxed photo. We need either an original photo (which we will return) or a downloadable internet image.

PERSONAL ADS: Christian Courier would be pleased to handle your personal ad in an efficient and discreet

manner. The cost to set up a personal file under a unique file number is \$25. Ads requesting correspondence with this file are run at \$8 P.I. per insertion. All correspondence is immediately forwarded unopened.

NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS: We offer a \$25 one-year subscription to couples whose wedding is announced in Christian Courier and to parents who announce a child's birth in our paper. If you want to take advantage of this offer, please let us know when placing your ad.

SUBMITTING YOUR AD

Mail: Christian Courier
5 Joanna Dr St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1
fax: 905-682-8313 e-mail: see above

OTHER INFORMATION: Christian Courier reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format and editing style and is not responsible for any errors due to hand-written or phoned-in advertisements.

Low interest rates getting you down?

If you're over 65, have you considered a charitable gift annuity?

- Wonderful income - as high as 10%
- Largely tax exempt
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- This lasts as long as you live
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Never heard of a gift annuity? Call for a no-obligation quotation or have a child or grandchildren call on your behalf.

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Ph: 1-800-387-8146
Fax: 416-465-6367
www.linkcharity.ca Email: info@linkcharity.ca

Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Dec 21** Liberation choir 4th annual Christmas sing-a-long concert. 8 pm Redeemer University. See ad.
- Dec 22** Liberation choir 4th annual Christmas sing-a-long concert. 8 pm Rehoboth CRC, Bowmanville. See ad.
- Jan 13** **Dutch Service** will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Jacob Kuntz will be preaching.
- Jan 27** Maranatha CRC, **Cambridge** 50th anniversary. A special service to be held at 10 a.m. More events will be held in April.
- Feb 15-17** Marriage encounter weekend in **Niagara Falls**, ON. For more information or to register on-line, go to www.reformedme.org or contact Chris & Cindy Otten at 519-393-5163 or by email at Ontario_Registration@reformedme.org.
- April 19, 20** Maranatha CRC, **Cambridge** 50th anniversary. Celebrations and special events will be held on Saturday April 19 at 7 p.m. and Sunday April 20 during the 10 a.m. service.
- May 2-4** Marriage encounter weekend in **London**, ON. For more information or to register on-line, go to www.reformedme.org or contact Chris & Cindy Otten at 519-393-5163 or by email at Ontario_Registration@reformedme.org.



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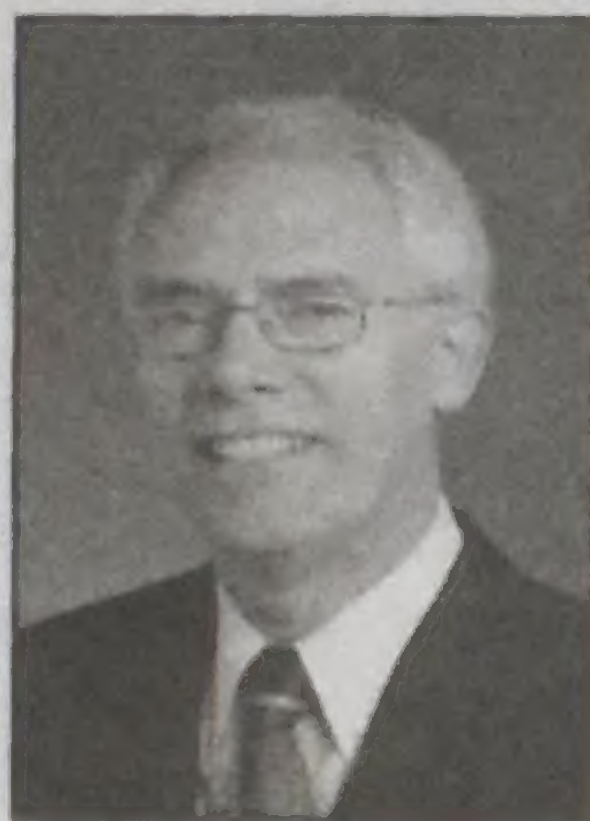
Ph: 905-526-9800

Fax: 905-526-0732

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We, the staff and board of
Christian Courier
wish our readers all the blessings
of peace - reconciliation with God and
with one another - this season and
throughout the coming year.

Board:
Gary Van Eyk
Emma Winter
Sylvan Gerritsma
Nelly Westerhoff

Staff:
Harry DerNederlanden
Rose DerNederlanden
Ineke Medcalf-Strayer
Kim Yungblut

Greetings of the Season and Best Wishes for the New Year

GARY VAN EYK, CMA
63 Church Street Suite 501
St Catharines ON L2R 3C4
Ph: 905-646-7331

**It's arrived!**

Look for it inside the
December 3rd
issue of Christian Courier.

Gift Giving Guide (catalogue)

Great gift ideas!!!

Eurovangelism EuroAid

Rev. Brian Lise ~ Director
1-866-630-6301



May the Peace and Joy of Christ be yours.

Christmas Greetings to the readers of *Christian Courier*
from Harry Houtman & the board of directors

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We pay 4.75% on CRC deposits.

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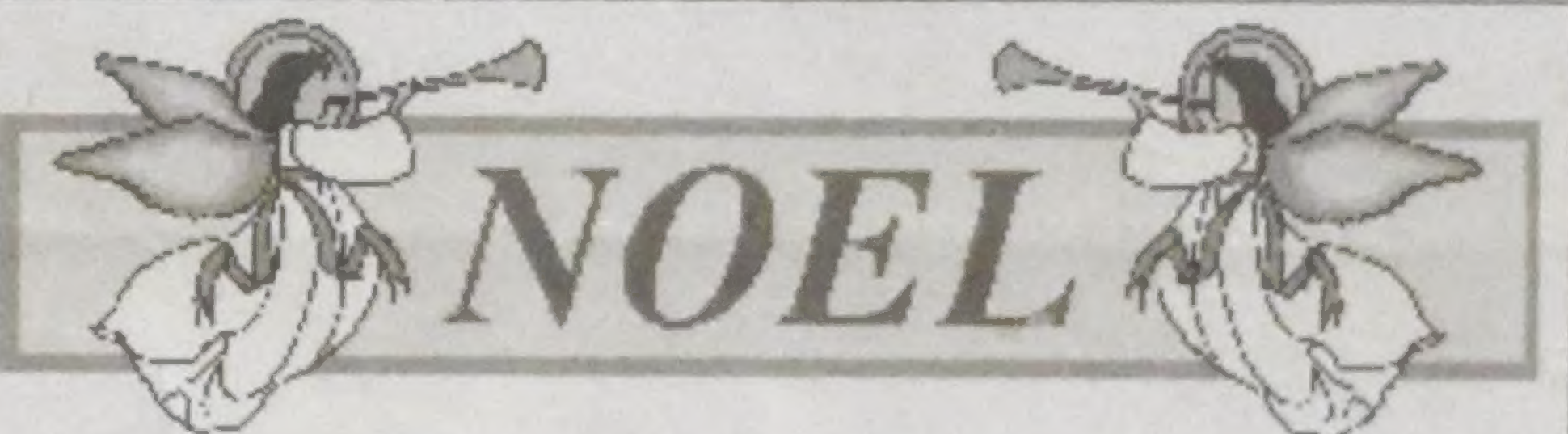
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Join the Liberation Choir for the

4TH ANNUAL CHRISTMAS SING-A-LONG CONCERT!

The 200 voice mixed choir is hosting two benefit concerts for Worldwide Christian Schools.

Join us at

Redeemer University College, Ancaster ON
Friday, December 21st at 8 p.m.

or at

Rehoboth Christian Reformed Church, Bowmanville
Saturday, December 22nd at 8 p.m.

There will be a freewill offering, with receipts available for any donation over \$10.00.

For more information or directions, visit

www.liberationchoir.com or www.wwcs.org,

or phone Worldwide Christian Schools at 866-360-4274.



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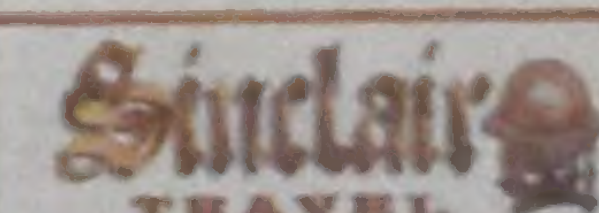
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For more information or for a complete flyer contact : Lorraine van Bodegom

Home: 1 - 604 - 852 - 6828 Fax: 1 - 604 - 852 - 6844 Or Email: vanbodegom@telus.net

~ALL ARE WELCOME TO JOIN US~ Frisian, Dutch, American, Canadian or anyone with a Frisian connection!